

# British History

HARPERCOLLINS COLLEGE OUTLINE

4th Edition  
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Bethel College, Kansas

To students in my history courses whose interest and questions have made the teaching and writing of British history a continuing delight.

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# Preface

*History* is a Greek word which means, literally, "investigation." This volume of *British History* seeks to be an investigation into human history and accomplishments in that pivotal and historical island kingdom of Great Britain. Its function is to bring history to life and to offer in abbreviated form some coherence to the complexity and confusion that make up the human and historical record.

In this particular HarperCollins College Outline volume there are actually two goals: (1) to serve as a supplemental outline and condensed summary to assist students in grasping the more extensive study of British history and culture—a digest of the salient points of British history; and (2) an interpretation of the British heritage and achievements so that the book can stand on its own merits as a slim-line basic text.

British history, and hopefully this volume, can properly serve as a vehicle to understanding many of the institutions and ideas of the large English-speaking world. The inhabitants of this small island kingdom have left a legacy that extends far beyond the shores of the British Isles. Such varied achievements as the parliamentary system; common law; Shakespearean drama; the games of tennis, football, and golf; the writ of habeas corpus; the Industrial Revolution; the Anglican, Methodist, Presbyterian, and Congregational churches; and the Commonwealth of Nations that now includes fifty former territories of the British empire are all part of this legacy.

Many of the millions of British emigrants transplanted their institutions, traditions, and ideas of a free society to the colonies. The United States was the largest of these transplantations. In fact, almost one-half of the span of American history (1607–1783) is essentially British colonial history. A. L. Rowse, the noted Elizabethan historian, in observing that the United States has picked up Britain's mantle of leadership in the Western world, argues that "America is, after all, the greatest achievement of the English people."

From pre-Roman Britain to post-World War II and the decline from greatness, this volume seeks to reveal the elements of order—of continuity and change—that mark the checkered history of Britain. Beyond the “what” and “when” and “how” of the historical narrative, a concerted effort is also made to ask “why” in order that the account may provide understanding, as well as information.

Many colleagues have contributed, either in their teaching or in their counsel, to the focus and features of this book. To Jonathan E. Brodman and Fred N. Grayson of American BookWorks Corporation, I am particularly indebted. Their encouragement and suggestions spurred my efforts in this project. Robert A. Weinstein’s careful criticisms as project editor and reviewer helped immeasurably to sharpen the focus of the writing. Also, without the efficiency and word-processing skills of two very special assistants, Ilene Schmidt and Cynthia Goerzen, I would not have been able to complete this volume anywhere near the scheduled deadline.

HAROLD J. SCHULTZ

# Celtic and Roman Britain

1

- ca. 6000 B.C. North Sea floods the land joining Britain and the Continent
- ca. 2500 B.C. Invasion of Britain by the Beaker Folk
- Last Century B.C. The final migration of Celts to Britain
- 55 B.C. Julius Caesar invades Britain; recorded history begins
- 122 A.D. Emperor Hadrian orders the building of the wall dividing Scotland from England
- 407 A.D. Last Roman soldiers withdraw from Britain

Central to the history and character of the British people is their geographical location. Being situated twenty-one miles from the Continent makes Britain part of Europe, but with a separate and insular identity. The relation of Britain to the sea and her separation from the Continent are the keys to her history.

The early history of Britain is essentially a chronicle of invasions and migrations. Wave after wave of Continental tribes landed on British shores. After the last of these migrant settlers, the Celts, had subdued the tribes of southeast Britain, the Roman legions, in turn, subdued the Celts.

In contrast to the earlier invaders, the Romans came to Britain to rule and exploit the island, not to settle permanently. Roman rule was urban and efficient, but remained alien, and therefore only temporary in its effects.



## AN ISLAND PEOPLE

Britain is an island and its history is uniquely shaped by that fact and its location just off the coast of Continental Europe. In early times the relation of Britain to the sea was largely passive, permitting wave after wave of invaders; in modern times the sea was a highway to profit and power. As an insular people Britain could oppose a standing army and the militaristic traditions linked to it. Britain was defended by the sea and its navy and became a maritime power. At first the sea isolated Britain from the more advanced civilizations around the Mediterranean. Then, as the Atlantic replaced the Mediterranean as the center of commerce and culture, Britain moved from the periphery to the center of power and world events.

### The Land and Its Resources

The physical formation, climate and minerals of the country tempted the early invaders to settle and determined the paths of settlement they followed. Not having mastered nature, the successive invaders claimed the rich and accessible lowlands of southern and eastern Britain and drove the earlier inhabitants to the north and west. The physical map will show why it was so accessible from the Continent, for the land slopes downward from the highlands to the north and from the craggy coast of the Atlantic to the low, flat plains of the southeast. Because of the general slope of land from north to southeast most English rivers have their outlets on the south and the east coasts. Invaders moved inland by following the Trent, the Welland, the Nen, and the Thames rivers to the midlands. Later, these rivers doubled as main arteries of trade. In the southwest the Severn River served the same dual function for the area of the Welsh border. As the invaders reached the highlands of the north and west, they halted, and these inhospitable regions became havens for the displaced older cultures. Consequently, the Scottish Highlands, Wales, and Cornwall were inhabited by the older stocks; and to this day they are commonly called the "Celtic fringe."

### The Islands

The five thousand British Isles, dominated by the two major islands of Britain (labeled *Britannia* by Julius Caesar) and Ireland, cover approximately 120,000 square miles, with the area of England totaling less than half this amount (50,331 square miles). The first human beings came to Britain in the Old Stone Age when the land was still joined to the Continent. With the closing of the Great Ice Age, the receding glaciations transformed the physical surface of the land and left it an island.

### CLIMATE

Around 3500 B.C. in the Neolithic or Late Stone Age, the first agriculturalists crossed the Channel and revolutionized the existing society of cave-dwelling hunters by introducing a new way of life; they bred cattle,

sowed grain, and later developed a flint-mining industry. The more temperate climate of Britain after the Ice Ages was well suited to the growing of crops, and the southwest winds following the Gulf Stream kept England at a warmer and more equable temperature than its latitude would ordinarily permit. Although the rainfall was moderate, the oceanic climate produced fog, mist, and haze so that visitors, from Tacitus to modern tourists, have written about the wretched weather.

### NATURAL RESOURCES

The temperate climate, coupled with a fairly rich soil, promoted the growing of wheat and barley. Good harbors and the long, irregular coastline encouraged fishing and ocean trade. Copper and tin were found in abundance. By smelting the two metals together, the inhabitants manufactured bronze, and so marked the close of the lengthy Stone Age. Much later, conveniently located deposits of coal and iron would support England's industrial revolution.

### Prehistory of Britain

In Britain, as elsewhere, the story of early peoples can be traced through the various stone and metal ages. The migrant tribes moved westward in Europe and arrived in Britain during the Paleolithic (Old Stone) Age. Since each succeeding period or "age" was largely a transplanting from the Continent, Britain became a recipient of the migration of these peoples and the diffusion of their cultural practices in the period of prehistory.

### The Stone Ages

From stone and bone tools and skeletal remains it has been calculated that humans (*Homo sapiens*) first appeared in Britain by way of a land bridge between 200,000 and 300,000 years ago. In the New Stone Age a more civilized race of long-headed agriculturalists (frequently designated as the Windmill Hill people) crossed the Channel and set up primitive farming communities in southern England side by side with the older hunting communities. Around 2500 B.C. these peaceful and mild-mannered settlers were attacked in turn by tall, powerful, warlike invaders from the mountainous areas of Europe. They brought with them metal implements and thereby introduced a new age of bronze.

### The Beaker Folk

These latest invaders were designated as the Beaker Folk after the shape of their drinking vessels. These newcomers possessed a mastery of metal workmanship that was reflected in the variety of weapons and tools they produced. They wore woolen and linen clothes, greatly admired jewelry, but had little interest in farming. Where the earlier immigrants had worshipped Mother Earth, the Beaker Folk worshipped the Sun in temples open to the sky. Stonehenge, a circular grouping of massive stones, remains to this day a fascinating and impressive monument to their religious practices and to the engineering skill and organization of the peoples who built it.

Other immigrations followed and by 1500 B.C. the blending of these immigrant traditions established the distinctive Wessex culture in Britain: an age of bronze, an organized religion and priesthood, and a tribal aristocracy centered around a kinglike chief and a slowly evolving aristocracy.

### The Celtic Invaders

The last of the early invaders were the Celts, the first conquerors of Britain about whom the Romans wrote. They transformed cultural life in the south of Britain, bringing with them the higher civilization of the Iron Age and the use of money. Once settled they founded kingdoms, instituted the priesthood, and created new art forms.

### Celtic Origins

The word "Celt," in terms of British identity, is more a matter of civilization and language than race. Threatened by rival groups, the Celtic-speaking tribes of France and western Germany migrated to the British Isles to obtain relief from Continental conflicts. During the millennium before Christ, bands of Celtic invaders, armed with battle-axes and double-edged swords, landed on the south and east coasts and moved inland and as far north as Scotland.

### Celtic Society

The invaders wove cloth, shaved their bodies, and made agriculture and grazing important industries. Communities of farmers lived in either hut villages or protected homesteads, and the clan—a group of families claiming descent from a common ancestor—became the center of their social organization. The two classes within Celtic society that counted most were the warriors and the priests. Over the years Celtic culture advanced as the tribes became expert in working tin, bronze, and iron; their pottery and their metal helmets indicated a growing interest and ability in the abstract decorative arts and in ornamentation. The south Britons had a gold coinage similar to that of Macedonia, and their tribal leaders led a revelrous life, enriched with imported wines and luxury goods. Clearly the Celts were not primitive savages, painted with blue dye, and beyond the pale of civilization, as was once thought.

### CELTIC RELIGION

Druidism originated in England and spread to Gaul (modern-day France and Belgium) and Ireland. The druids were an organized caste of priests who exercised great powers. They preached a religion of fear and immortality, worshipped various nature gods in sacred groves, and offered human sacrifices. Druid priests commanded prestige and served as judges and leaders of tribal opinion.

## **ROMAN BRITAIN**

### **CELTIC BRITAIN AND GAUL**

Druidism, trade, and racial affinity were three of the ties between Britain and Gaul, across the Channel. The link became even more direct in 75 B.C. when the Belgic tribes of Gaul claimed southeast Britain (modern-day Kent, Middlesex and Hertfordshire) as their kingdoms. These Gallic Celts dispersed the native Celts from the best lands of the southeast and were the first tribes to face the next invader, Caesar.

In contrast to the earlier Celt or later Saxon invaders, the Romans came to Britain to rule and exploit the island as part of a world empire, not to push back the inhabitants to the fringes of the region and settle in their place. The Roman objectives in this new method of conquest produced quite different results. Roman rule became urban and efficient. The atmosphere of the Mediterranean world with its Latin tongue, its country villas, and its new faith, Christianity, were introduced. Nevertheless their rule remained alien, and therefore only temporary in its effects.

### The Roman Conquests

The annexation of Britain was scarcely a primary objective of Roman expansion, for the British Isles marked the fringe of civilization to those who ruled in imperial Rome. However, when the Romans decided to conquer and colonize Britain, their superior military and political organization was decisive.

### The Invasions of Julius Caesar, 55-54 B.C.

Two attacks on Britain were made by Julius Caesar during his conquest of Gaul. Certainly one of his reasons was to punish the southern Britons who were providing aid to their kinsmen in northern Gaul. No doubt, too, Caesar's popularity and position would be enhanced by another victory that would provide tribute and slaves for his supporters in Rome and booty for his soldiers. His first expedition (55 B.C.) was a military failure, but he returned the next year with five legions. This time Caesar won several battles against Celtic armies and penetrated inland approximately to where London now stands. The Britons sued for peace, and Caesar granted a treaty on easy terms because, with renewed disturbances in Gaul, he was content with hostages and a promise of yearly tribute. The Romans then departed from Britain, and Caesar, lured on by larger stakes in Rome, crossed the Rubicon to his final triumph and tragedy.

RESULTS OF CAESAR'S INVASIONS

Caesar described his conquest graphically in his commentaries *On the Gallic Wars*, but his sorties into Britain had few permanent results except to increase trade between Britain and the Latinized province of Gaul and to permit Roman traders and settlers to enter Britain peacefully. Caesar's invasions also proved that the Romans could conquer Britain at their convenience if they were ready to devote time and men to that purpose. Almost a hundred years passed before it was convenient to do so.

Later Roman Conquests

Following Caesar's invasions Rome was preoccupied with more immediate matters and Britain received only perfunctory attention from the rulers in Rome. Under Emperor Claudius Rome renewed its interest, and this time Roman military and administrative control lasted nearly four centuries. Roman Britain was divided administratively into two units: a civil district in the southeast and a zone of military occupation in the highlands.

THE COMING OF CLAUDIUS

In 43 A.D. Emperor Claudius ordered Aulus Plautius to invade Britain. The decision was made because the emperor was anxious for glory and irritated by a revolt in Gaul instigated by the druids; and also because his Gallic origins increased his interest in conquering Britain. The British defenders, who were led by Caratacus, a son of Cunobelinus (Shakespeare's "Cymbeline"), displayed a vigorous but disunited resistance. The Roman historian Tacitus later commented upon this fact: "Our greatest advantage in coping with tribes so powerful is that they do not act in concert. Seldom is it that two or three states meet together to ward off a common danger. Thus, while they fight singly, they all are conquered." Within three years Plautius reduced the divided Britons to guerrilla reprisals and brought southeast Britain under Roman rule.

QUEEN BOUDICCA'S REVOLT

During the governorships of Scapula (47-54) and Suetonius (59-61) the Roman occupation extended northward and westward. While Suetonius was suppressing the druids at their sacred center of worship in Anglesey, the Iceni under Queen Boudicca revolted (61). The Iceni and their neighboring tribes attacked the Romans and the Britons who fraternized with them in the towns of Colchester, London, and Verulamium (St. Albans), in retaliation for the Roman confiscation of their property and the public outrages com-

\* *The Complete Works of Tacitus*. (New York: Random House, 1942), p. 684.

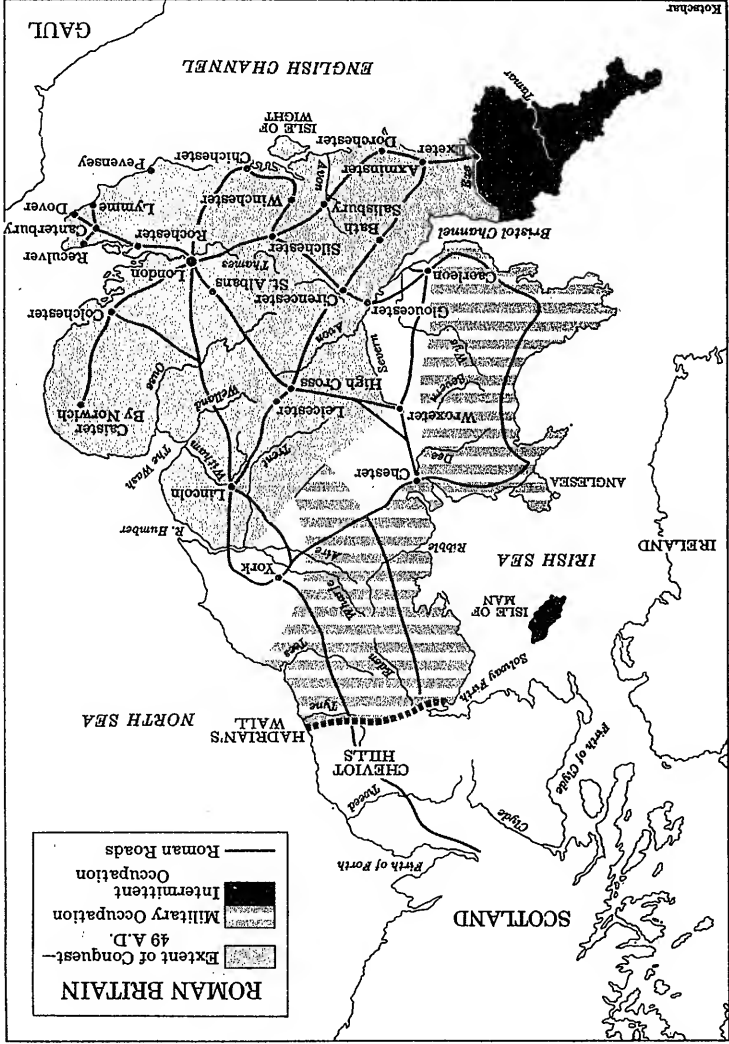


Fig. 1.1

mitted against their queen and her daughters. Tens of thousands were massacred in the uprising. Governor Suetonius returned with his legion and crushed the revolt in a crucial battle; Boudicca committed suicide, and Roman vengeance was inflicted upon the rebellious Britons.

EXPANSION OF ROMAN RULE

In 78 Agricola became the new governor, completed the conquest of Wales and extended Roman rule into Scotland. More is known of Agricola's able leadership and administration than of any other governor because Tacitus, his son-in-law, was Rome's most famous historian. Before Agricola was called back to Rome he was able to pacify the south of Britain by his conciliatory statesmanship; elsewhere Roman military expansion virtually ceased.

MILITARY CONSOLIDATION

The Roman garrison was reduced to three legions located at strategic centers near the frontiers—Caerleon and Chester on the border of Wales and at York in the north. In 122, to protect northern England from hostile tribes in Scotland, Emperor Hadrian ordered a wall built from the Tyne River to Solway Firth. This famous wall roughly divided England from Scotland. The Romans referred to "Scotland" as Caledonia and called its people Picts, or painted people, because they painted their bodies. A later emperor, Antonius Pius, extended Roman control northward and constructed a second fortification, the Antonine Wall, in 143. However, the Romans overextended their resources and the northern tribes intermittently overran both walls. These northern wars were the price Rome paid during these three centuries for the protection and peace of southern England.

PAX ROMANA

Under Roman rule the Britons began to live in towns and traveled from town to town on all-weather stone highways built for rapid military movement. In the south peace prevailed and the atmosphere of the Mediterranean world with its Latin tongue, its country estates and villas, and its dominant faith, Christianity, made a temporary cultural and commercial impact. But the Romans did not teach the Britons how to govern or how to defend themselves. They were dependent upon Roman rule for their peace as well as for their commerce and industry.

The Roman conquerors imposed on the Britons their imperial administrative structure which included racial and religious toleration and respect for local chiefs and customs as long as no political opposition was involved. Since Romans were convinced that civilization was based on urban life, the first thing they did was to build cities and the country village around which more efficient farming and cattle-raising developed.

Roman Institutions

ROMAN ADMINISTRATION

Between the reigns of Claudius (43) and Severus (211) the province of Britain was administered by Roman governors whose duties included maintaining peace, collecting taxes, and providing justice. For local government the Romans, like the British later in India and Africa, employed "indirect rule" by permitting loyal Celtic chiefs to continue to exercise authority over their tribesmen. On the frontiers the army administered the surrounding area, but in the Romano-British south, several privileged cities enjoyed self-government. In the cantons (tribal areas) the magistrates in Roman togas were usually local chiefs. This policy served both to Romanize Celtic leadership and to minimize friction between ruler and ruled. In the later years of Roman rule, after several ambitious generals had used their legions in Britain to defy the emperor, and after increasing raids from the Scots and the Picts had jeopardized Roman defenses, Britain was divided into two, and then four, provinces.

Roman Withdrawal

By the fourth century, the declining power of the Roman Empire encouraged the Picts, the Scots, and raiders from northern Europe to harass Roman outposts and to force the Romans to draw in their defensive borders. As the empire became more threatened by political factionalism and barbarian attacks from the east, Roman legions evacuated Britain to fight elsewhere and never returned. The last Roman soldier left the island in 407, and Britain, which had been defended by Rome for over three hundred years, had to fend helplessly for itself. Invaders now entered the country with ease and killed or displaced the Romanized Britons of the south and east.

Roman Achievements

Roman contributions to Britain were largely material. They built towns and established such features of urban life as forums, public baths, indoor plumbing, and amphitheaters. Joining these Romanized towns were a network of splendid stone highways that permitted the rapid movement of troops and commerce. The new city of London at the hub of this road system became the chief port of entry for commerce with the rest of the empire. The tradition of town houses and country estates (or villas) was another innovation. The urbanized Britons probably lived more comfortably under the Romans than at any other time until the nineteenth century, but some two-thirds of the Britons lived neither in town nor villas and Latin civilization made little impact on them. When Roman rule ended only the roads continued in use to remind the invading Saxons of Rome; in Wales a Celtic version of the Christian faith prospered, and Christianity was the only institution to survive the departure of the Romans. Perhaps, therefore, the greatest fact in the Roman occupation is a noteworthy negative fact—that the Roman conquerors did not succeed in permanently Latinizing Britain as they Latinized France (Gaul).

**T**he early history of Britain is one of invasion with each wave of invaders establishing a more advanced cultural and political pattern in southeast Britain, but having only a marginal impact in either their government or presence in present-day Wales or Scotland.

The Romans transported their urban life and Roman government to Britain and brought a superior system of roads as well as Christianity to Celtic Britain. But they failed to teach the Britons how to sustain Roman administration or how to defend themselves; thus when the legions withdrew from the island the Britons were once again easy prey for the next invaders.

***Selected Readings***

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 Laing, Lloyd. *Celtic Britain* (1979)  
 Myres, J. N. L. *The English Settlements* (1986)  
 Richmond, I. A. *Roman Britain* (1964)  
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 Salway, Peter. *Roman Britain* (1981)  
 Tacitus, *On Britain and Germany* (1960)

**2**

**Anglo-Saxon Supremacy  
and Conversion to  
Christianity**

- 461 Death of St. Patrick, British missionary to Ireland
- ca. 565 Saint Columba founds Celtic Christian monastery on the island of Iona
- 597 Pope Gregory I sends the Benedictine monk Augustine and forty missionaries to convert Britain
- 664 Synod of Whitby: King Oswy chooses Roman Catholic over Celtic version of Christianity
- 731 Venerable Bede writes *Ecclesiastical History of the English People*
- ca. 750 The epic poem *Beowulf* is written
- 899 Death of King Alfred the Great
- 1016 King Canute ascends thrones of Anglo-Saxon England and Denmark
- 1066 Death of Edward the Confessor, last undisputed Anglo-Saxon king

**T**he Anglo-Saxon settlement that followed Roman rule established the fundamental character of Britain more than any other influx of immigrants. From the Anglo-Saxons England received its name, its language, its largest ethnic group, its shires, and, for the first time, political unity as a single

kingdom, even though it lacked the necessary machinery for making the king powerful enough to govern his kingdom effectively.

When the Roman legions left the British Isles, Christianity did not leave with them. The Celtic Christian faith, from its center of Iona in the Irish Sea, and Latinized Christianity, with its ecclesiastical headquarters at Canterbury, blossomed in both moral leadership and scholarly achievement.

## THE ANGLO-SAXON CONQUEST

The British Isles were so situated that they were equally accessible to the civilizations of northern and southern Europe. Taking advantage of the Roman retreat from the island, the war-like tribes of northwestern Germany initially terrorized and eventually settled in Britain. These Nordic invaders came in small bands under several chieftains and lacked any kind of unified command; but the cumulative effect was to erase a superior Roman civilization and replace it with a less advanced culture that was illiterate and largely untouched by Latin Christianity or the Mediterranean world.

### The Northern Invaders

The Anglo-Saxons conquered the Britons in a fashion quite different from that of the Roman legions. Instead of a disciplined army of occupation the Nordic warriors crossed the Channel in shallow boats on sporadic forays and were followed years later by migrant clans of settlers. The conquest was never carried out systematically, and the invaders found it much easier to fight the Britons than to live peacefully together.

### ANGLO-SAXON ORIGINS

The three dominant Nordic tribes that made these successful sorties into Britain were the Angles, the Saxons, and the Jutes. Hailing from the Jutland peninsula and northern Germany, they shared a common love of the sea and traced the descent of their kings from the god Woden. Unlike their neighboring Germanic tribes, they had rarely traded or fought with the Romans nor had they come under the influence of Roman civilization or Christianity. They brought with them their Germanic culture with its rugged code of justice and loyalty to a chief or military leader. Although these tribesmen were usually farmers, they were more widely known as sailors of great skill whose zest for piracy and warfare made them the terror of more civilized neighbors. When the southward invasion of the crumbling Roman Empire was preempted by their neighboring Germanic groups, these tribes took to the sea in their longboats and made Britain their prize.

### Nature of the Invasion

The Anglo-Saxon conquest continued intermittently for two centuries; however, written records of the invasions are fragmentary at best and biased against the invaders. The Venerable Bede supports the traditional claim that the invasions began in the middle of the fifth century when two Jutish leaders, Hengist and Horsa, were invited to help the Britons defend themselves against repeated attacks by the Picts and the Scots from the north. Other details are provided by the Welsh monk Gildas in a tract, written in the first part of the sixth century, in which he bemoans the suffering and massacre of his countrymen at the hands of the Saxon invaders. However, we do know that the invaders first came for plunder; later they moved inland and decided to settle. About 500 A.D. the Britons temporarily halted the invasion with a victory at Mount Badon—perhaps under the British general Arthur (the legendary King Arthur of the Round Table and Camelot).

### OUTCOME OF THE INVASION

For the most part, the gradual Saxon infiltration of the Romano-British southeast encountered no great resistance. The disunited Britons lacked spirit and strategy in facing both the invaders from the south and the Scots and Picts from the north. The outcome was the gradual replacement of the Roman-Celtic culture of central England with the more primitive culture of the Anglo-Saxons; the Britons were either killed or enslaved, or fled to the islands. However, the new invaders, like their Roman predecessors, did not triumph in the Celtic fringe. Particularly in central England, Roman cities were reduced to ruins since the Anglo-Saxons continued their style of living in the open countryside. Once settled, the Anglo-Saxons broke yet another Roman pattern—the involvement with Continental affairs.

### The Heptarchy

Lacking a tradition of national unity or a single leader to unify their conquests, the marauding tribes carved out separate kingdoms in England. Gradually seven kingdoms, known as the heptarchy, emerged from the welter of rival claimants. Kent was occupied by the Jutes; the three kingdoms of Essex, Sussex and Wessex were settled by the Saxons; and the Angles claimed East Anglia, Mercia, and Northumbria. At times a common *Bretwalda* (Britain-ruler) imposed temporary unity over these kingdoms. Kent was the first dominant kingdom, especially during the reign of King Ethelbert (ca. 552–616). Northumbria succeeded Kent as the leading state in the early seventh century and was superseded by Mercia and Wales in 632.

### OFFA II

The last of the Mercian overlords, Offa II, ruled from 757 to 796. During these years he extended his kingdom north and west, codified laws, and won recognition from the pope and Charlemagne. Offa conquered Wessex and



established supremacy over all England south of the Humber; he is often considered the first overlord to be recognized as "king of the whole of the land of the English." With his death the Mercian supremacy of two hundred years passed in 802 to Wessex under King Egbert (775-839). Egbert defeated the Merctians, and his son Ethelwulf continued the consolidation of Wessex; but even before Egbert's death the Danes were making their first raids along the English coast.

## THE RETURN OF CHRISTIANITY

Christianity did not desert the British Isles with the Roman legions. The Celtic Christian faith, although detached from Rome, remained vital in Wales through the years of Saxon encroachments. In 597 Latinized Christianity returned to Britain and eventually triumphed over both the Celtic church and the pagan religion of the Saxons. With the Roman Church reestablished, England once again made contact with the language, law, and administrative organization of Mediterranean civilization.

### The Christian Faith

The new message from Rome and from the Celtic island of Iona was undoubtedly foreign to the Nordic tradition. Instead of a warrior's religion that reflected such traits of their culture as physical valor and feasts for martial heroes, Christianity spoke of love, repentance, and redemption. It suggested great hope, yet, at the same time, great fear of the afterlife. It also, in the organization of the Roman Catholic Church, retained the character and forms of the civil administration of the Western Roman Empire. The medieval Church, more than any other political or cultural organization, was an institutional legacy of the Roman Empire.

### Celtic Christianity

For two hundred years Christianity in Britain was almost severed from Roman influence. During this time the Celtic (Welsh and Irish) church prospered in adversity; Christianity frequently was the badge of distinction separating the Celts from their pagan attackers. The new faith with its ascetic idealism and consummate dedication grew rapidly in the fifth and sixth centuries. From 432 to 461 Saint Patrick of Britain converted Ireland and founded a church more famous for the high degree of learning and autonomy of its monasteries than for its episcopal organization (church government administered through bishops). An Irish monk, Saint Columba, brought the faith to western Scotland in the next century. Missionaries set out from his monastery on the island of Iona in the Irish Sea to convert the Picts in Scotland, and later won converts in England and on the Continent. In 617 Oswald of Northumbria became a Christian during his exile in Iona and,

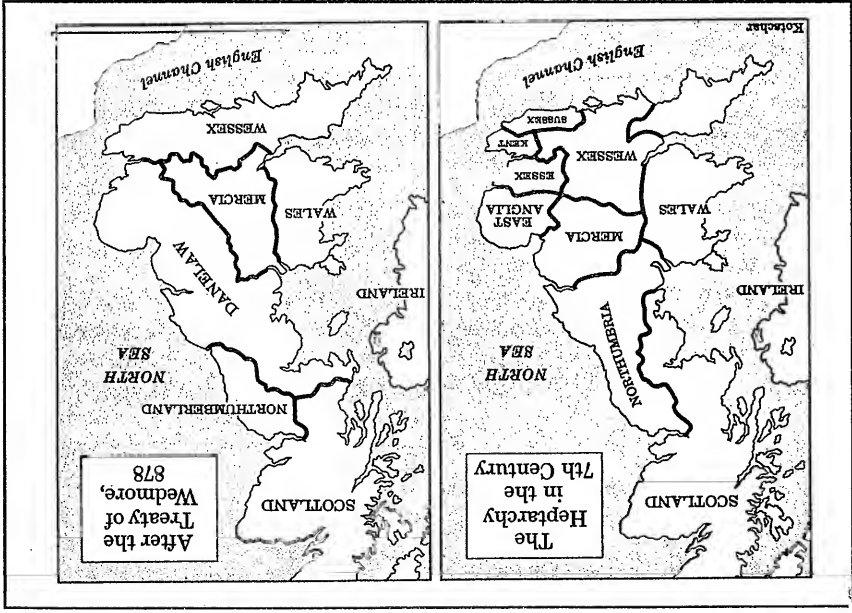


Fig. 2.1 Anglo-Saxon England

after becoming king in 634, assisted Celtic missionaries in introducing the Christian faith to all Northumbria.

### Roman Christianity

In 597 Pope Gregory I, as part of his effort to convert the conquerors of the Roman Empire, sent the Benedictine monk Augustine, to Britain with forty missionaries. King Ethelbert of Kent cordially received the missionary party since his Frankish wife was already a Christian. Within a year the monks converted Ethelbert and made his capital, Canterbury, the seat of the archbishopric—a position it still holds today. In the seventh century Christianity gradually enlarged its influence in the heptarchy. When a king became a Christian, he would usually decree that Christianity was the official religion of his kingdom. Thus by the middle of the seventh century most of Britain had been converted to either Celtic or Roman Christianity, and the conflict between paganism and Christianity was replaced by a rivalry between two forms of Christianity.

### SYNOD OF WHITBY, 664

Because the Celtic church survived and prospered outside the jurisdiction of Roman Catholicism, it developed differences on several matters of polity and theology. It preferred, for example, a decentralized or autonomous church organization, a simpler liturgy, and a different date for Easter; the Celtic clergy even shaved their heads in a different manner. When the rivalry could not be reconciled and the conflict left King Oswy of Nor-

thumberia with a divided church (and citizenry) in his kingdom, an ec-  
clesiastical conference was summoned to settle the matter. Impressed by the  
political and cultural advantages of identifying his faith with the Latin world,  
Oswy decided in favor of the Roman communion. The Celtic churchmen  
gradually withdrew to Iona, leaving the Roman Church to organize England.

### The Roman Church in England

Five years after the Synod of Whitby, Theodore of Tarsus became the  
new Archbishop. His organizing and administrative abilities were  
manifested in the precedents and reforms that shaped the organization of the  
English church. He set up regular church councils and laid the groundwork  
for the modern parish system. By providing counsel to rulers and offering  
the one basis for unity among feuding kingdoms, the power of the clergy  
increased. Under Theodore's successors the Church flourished both in  
missionary enterprise and in the dissemination of culture. It sent mis-  
sionaries to the Continent and established schools in England whose  
graduates provided moral leadership and scholarly achievement. The out-  
standing caliber of this scholarship is exemplified by the "father of English  
history," the Venerable Bede (673-735), whose broad historical vision in his  
*Ecclesiastical History of the English People* caught for the first time the  
unity of the English as a people and, also, as part of a greater unity—the  
Church Universal. In Northumbria, in particular, the new learning and new  
art forms flourished. By the eighth century English scholarship was at least  
the equivalent of that in western Europe, and Christianity had again brought  
Britain back into the mainstream of western civilization.

## ALFRED THE GREAT AND THE DANISH THREAT

Often considered the greatest of the Anglo-Saxon kings, Alfred well  
deserved the compliment. Scholar, educator, and military hero, he saved  
southern England from another submersion by Nordic invaders. His suc-  
cessful defense against the Danes preserved the identity of Anglo-Saxon  
Wessex and strengthened the Christian faith while his achievements as a  
scholar, translator, and educator gave his people a valuable literature in their  
own tongue.

At the beginning of the ninth century the Anglo-Saxons experienced  
pirateering and pillage similar to that which they had inflicted on the Britons  
three hundred years earlier. The invaders were Norsemen (or Vikings) who  
hailed from Scandinavia. Their attacks on the British Isles were part of the

great Viking expansion reaching from Russia to Greenland; the terror of  
Viking attacks shifted in the middle of the ninth century from plundering  
expeditions to settlement as a large army of conquest landed and moved  
inland in 865. These invaders systematically pillaged and then seized the  
land and settled among the English population. The kings of Wessex  
repulsed the invaders on several occasions; but soon the kingdoms of  
Northumbria and East Anglia were destroyed and Mercia bought temporary  
peace with ransom money. By 870 only Wessex remained free of Danish  
control.

In 871, Alfred, the youngest son of King Ethelwulf, succeeded his  
brother, Ethelred, as king of Wessex. Already a military veteran at the age  
of twenty-two, Alfred halted the Danish advance that year, and a temporary  
truce was concluded while the Danes organized the rest of England. After  
repeated attacks in 876 and 878 Wessex was finally overrun by the Danes,  
and Alfred escaped only by hiding in the swamps of Somerset.

### PEACE OF CHIPPENHAM, 878, AND GUTHRUM'S PEACE, 886

Rallying his scattered supporters, Alfred decisively defeated the Danes  
and their leader, Guthrum, at Edington—the turning point in the war. The  
peace treaty made at Chippenham imposed two demands on the Danes:  
Guthrum must accept baptism as a Christian, and the Danes must leave  
Wessex. Additional battles followed as more Danish invaders arrived and  
joined their kinsmen against Alfred. It was during these years that Alfred  
built England's first navy, erected strategic fortifications as places of refuge  
for his subjects, and remodeled the local militia (or *fyrð*) into active and  
reserve units. After seizing London in 886, Alfred was recognized as not  
only king of Wessex, but king of all England. That same year he concluded  
the Treaty of Wedmore with Guthrum which defined the boundary between  
Danish and English authority, with the Danish north and east identified as  
the Danelaw.

### PEACETIME LEADERSHIP

Alfred's achievements do not end with his outstanding generalship.  
Danish raids had undermined law and order and had destroyed monasteries  
and churches; schooling and Christianity were in decline. The King showed  
his many talents beyond military generalship by leading a religious and  
literary revival. He hired the few scholars available to teach in his court  
school and expected royal officials to follow suit by educating themselves  
and, then, those around them. Alfred also translated important books from  
Latin into English, adding prefaces that revealed artistry and scholarship.  
His conception of an English nation also stimulated the writing of the

### Alfred of Wessex

*Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* which recorded the narrative of England to his time. Alfred also kept in constant contact with Rome and with leaders on the Continent. He was Saxon England's greatest lawgiver, and toward the end of his reign he issued a code of laws for the Anglo-Saxon kingdoms. More than any previous king, he won the affection of his subjects and is the only ruler in British history who is known as "the Great."

## ANGLO-SAXON INSTITUTIONS AND SOCIETY

The Anglo-Saxon tribes transplanted their Germanic institutions to Britain, but these practices did not unify the English people as much as did the monarchy and the Church. Whatever political unity was realized before Alfred was the consequence of the individual abilities of the monarch, for the king was the government. In contrast, the Church provided an ongoing parish organization and a common faith. Socially, inequality was recognized as a fact of life; each freeman had his rights, but these rights differed markedly from class to class.

### Political Organization

The gradual appearance of some semblance of "national" unity was the most striking feature of the later Anglo-Saxon period. From dozens of tribal kings there emerged a single kingdom depending largely for survival on the personal power of the king. However, this movement toward unity and centralization failed to produce an adequate administrative structure; only substantial remodeling (by the Normans) would insure its survival. In contrast, local government introduced in Saxon England became an integral part of English constitutional practice.

### KINGSHIP

At the center of government stood the king, who wielded full, but by no means absolute, power; treason against him was the most serious of all crimes. Royal power and prestige grew as the kingdom enlarged its boundaries and as the Church found it prudent to support the monarchy. The trend toward centralization was kept in check by limited revenue, a small staff of administrators, and the jealous guarding of local patriotism and practices. Aside from the *Danegeld* (a direct land tax on the whole kingdom), the king had few rights to tax. He derived his revenue from rents on his estates or from fees and fines, and, in addition, he had the right to exact personal work or services from his subjects.

### THE WITAN

A weakness in Anglo-Saxon government was the lack of any fixed principle of royal succession. The Crown was usually inherited, but in practice the leading noblemen selected the new king from any member of the royal family. Most of these nobles, along with influential bishops and court officials, were members of the witan, which was an advisory council selected by the king. The witan served as the highest court in the land and assisted the king in framing decrees. Since only a royal summons could call the witan into session, it could not serve as a regular restraint on the power of the king. However, the king's consultation with this body helped set a precedent for the demands of consultative bodies in later centuries.

### LOCAL GOVERNMENT

In the later Anglo-Saxon period most of England was divided into administrative districts known as shires. These began first in the kingdom of Wessex. As Wessex, under Alfred, expanded its authority into Mercia and the Danelaw, these districts were also established on the Wessex model. Four levels of local government evolved.

**Shire.** The shire (called "county" after the Norman Conquest) was the largest unit. Some shires marked the boundaries of early kingdoms, such as Kent; others took the name of the town which administered their areas, as Worcestershire. The chief official in the shire was the *ealdorman*, who was originally the king's representative, but his office later became hereditary and more autonomous. A more direct agent of the king was the *shire reeve* (sheriff), who collected rents from the crown lands. When the king's powers grew under the Normans, so did the sheriff's, at the expense of the local earl (a nobleman of high rank). The bishop was the third important official of the shire.

**Hundreds.** Each shire was divided into several hundreds. Their boundaries may have been based originally on one hundred "hides" or men. One hide commonly consisted of an estate sufficient to support the family of an individual warrior. Each hundred, like the shire, had its own assembly or *moor*, and was presided over by the *hundred reeve*. Freemen elected the leaders of the hundred and participated in the sessions of the *hundred moor* which handled the bulk of local court cases.

**Tun.** The tun or agricultural village was the next level of local government. Urban life was not characteristic of the Anglo-Saxons, and the township was more of an agricultural community than a modern town. Village inhabitants met to draw lots for land tillage, but handled little legal or political business.

**Borough.** The last division was the borough. In the later Anglo-Saxon period the kings built fortresses in strategic or populous areas for security of the inhabitants and in these centers a market and a borough court of justice

became common. The borough was created by a charter from the landlord, who was usually the king. The charter confirmed many privileges, one of the most valuable being the right of borough residents to collect their own taxes and pay the king a lump sum. The rise of the boroughs reflected both the increasing influence of the king and a revival of town life.

### Law and Justice

The Saxon code of law was personal and elementary. The principle of "an eye for an eye" was in force, with the responsibility resting with the injured person, or his kinsmen, to exact private revenge on the offender. Over the centuries this code was modified by the influence of Christianity and the laws of the kings so that the injured party or his family accepted a cash payment or *bot* in lieu of physical retaliation on the offender; in the case of homicide *wergeld* was the fine paid to relatives of the deceased. An elaborate tariff or price list developed for various injuries (the price for the loss of the big toe was twenty shillings; five for the little toe) and for each social class. If a *churl* (a man who was in the lowest rank of freemen below an earl and a thane) killed an earl, the compensation was from three to ten times greater than if an earl killed a churl. The motive for the crime or the way the injury occurred was not considered important.

### THE COURTS

Judicial procedures were an important feature of the shire moot and the hundred moot, although cases too important or controversial for the lesser courts were tried in the witan. The shire court usually met twice a year; the sheriff, earl, and bishop served as officials, and all the freemen were eligible to attend. Since laws were largely custom rather than statute, a defendant stated his case and the court decided what criminal charge, if any, applied and what penalty operated in that particular shire for such an offense. The hundred court met monthly and settled local civil and criminal cases with no provision for an appeal.

### TRIALS

Each case opened with both plaintiff and defendant swearing their complaint or denial under oath. Trial was by compurgation or ordeal. In compurgation the defendant declared his innocence before man and God with a number of compurgators (character witnesses) swearing that his oath was true. In most criminal cases, or if the defendant lacked friends, the trial was by ordeal. This method operated on the premise that God would miraculously intervene to protect the innocent from injury or death. The three most common ordeals were by hot water, hot iron, and cold water. If the defendant was found guilty and lacked money to make a cash settlement, he was usually outlawed, mutilated or executed; jails were unknown.

### Social Classes

The Anglo-Saxons arrived in England with a rather fluid social hierarchy based on the *comitatus* (a military band); in England the inequality between classes increased. The king and the earls, hereditary nobility, composed the aristocracy. Gradually a lesser class of free servants, known as *thanes* or *thegns*, emerged; they were frequently rewarded with land gifts in payment for their military service to the king. Beneath the thane was the churl (ceorl) who was a freeman and small landholder or artisan. Churls were liable for military service in the fyrd, but could move around freely. *Serfs* were personally free but bound to the land and the service of their lord. In time, many churls dropped to serf status because they lost their land or gave it to a lord in return for protection. The lowest class was the *thral* or slave who most likely had lost his freedom by defeat in war or through legal punishment. Women were treated as perpetual minors under early Germanic law and custom. Gradually less restrictive traditions developed and by the tenth century women could hold property, and influential nunneries operated quite independently of secular male authority.

### Economic Organization

Almost all these classes lived in small agricultural villages. Not until the rise of trade in the tenth and eleventh centuries did towns become important again. Farming villages generally consisted of the thatched huts of farm workers, the great house of the local lord, a mill, and a church. The villagers had a common pasture and meadows and cultivated their arable land by means of the two- or three-field open strip system. Economically, the communal village was virtually self-sufficient, and its daily routine was seldom unsettled except by war or pestilence. Land continued to be the basis of wealth although at the end of the Anglo-Saxon period commerce began to develop, particularly in the decorated arts, but the overwhelming majority of inhabitants continued to earn their living from the soil.

### Anglo-Saxon Literature

Churchmen made a crucial contribution in nurturing and preserving the learning and literature of the age. Clerics copied and illuminated books with artistic designs and lettering, established and taught in the few schools, and made Latin literature available. The Venerable Bede was the outstanding scholar of the Old English period. His forty books covered a variety of theological and historical subjects; his most admired work, the *Ecclesiastical History of the English People*, provided the most inclusive and comprehensive account of the early history of England. His standard of scholarship was continued by Alcuin (735–804), who left York to head Charlemagne's palace-school, and by Alfred the Great, who wrote numerous translations from Latin into West Saxon. The epic poem *Beowulf* (composed ca. 750) tells the story of a pagan Saxon hero who valiantly defies men and dragons with equanimity. Aldhelm (ca. 640–709), the Bishop of Sherborne,



was a noted Latin scholar and lover of English songs. His contemporary Caedmon, the first English poet known by name, was a Northumbrian monk who introduced Old Testament themes in his poems. In the eighth century Cynewulf's religious poems were admired as the most imaginative of the Old English verse.

After the Danish invasions the revival of prose was best represented in the vernacular sermons and discourses of Aelfric (ca. 955–ca. 1020). He also provided a readable English version of the first seven books of the Bible. *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, which spans five centuries of English history, was the cumulative work of numerous monks in different monasteries. Alfred the Great is believed to have greatly stimulated the writing of this *Chronicle* and remains the towering figure of the Anglo-Saxon period who combined the best qualities of scholar, churchman and ruler.

## FROM ALFRED TO EDWARD THE CONFESSOR

After Alfred's death in 899 the leadership of the House of Wessex continued strong under his son and grandson, only to decay and suffer eclipse under the second wave of Danish invaders. This time the Danes conquered all of England and restored political unity to the country. Following the death of Canute, Edward the Confessor, the last undisputed Anglo-Saxon king, ruled England in an undisputed fashion that prepared the way for the Norman Conquest.

### The Second Danish Invasion

The pattern of coexistence that emerged between the Dane and the Saxon under the aegis of the House of Wessex collapsed with the invasions of the tenth century. The defeated English ransomed themselves by the payment of the Danegeld in exorbitant sums. This payment of the Danegeld (a tax on land) established direct royal taxation in England and greatly hastened the decline of the freeholder into the serf.

### The Rise and Fall of the House of Wessex

For seventy-five years the able successors of Alfred the Great extended the power and boundaries of Wessex. His son, Edward the Elder (899–924), assisted by his sister Ethelfleda, conquered all the lands south of the Humber River. Edward's son, Aethelstan (924–939), defeated the Scots and Picts, recovered the Danelaw, and claimed the title "Ruler of all Britain." Like his grandfather Alfred, Aethelstan was an outstanding ruler. Under King Edgar the Peaceful (959–975) Wessex reached its zenith of power and prosperity and was recognized as overlord by the Celtic kings of northern Britain; but

decline was rapid after his death and further confounded by the return of the Danes.

**ETHELRED THE UNREADY, 978–1016**

The reign of Edgar's second son, Ethelred, was a total disaster. Erratic, cruel, and lazy, he was completely unprepared to defend England against the Danish invasion. He tried to buy off the Danes in 991 with an extravagant payment of the Danegeld. In 1003 he ordered a massacre of all Danes in his kingdom, which, in turn, brought bloody retribution by the Danish king, Swein, and forced Ethelred to flee to the safety of his in-laws in Normandy. In 1016 both Ethelred and his much abler son, Edmund Ironside, died and the English were left without a leader. Having little choice, the Saxon witan selected Canute, son of Swein, as King of England the following year.

### KING CANUTE, 1016–1035

The young King, although a conqueror, soon adapted to English customs and stressed the continuity of his rule with the royal government of the past. He also converted to Christianity and won the support of the Church. When Canute added Norway to his English and Danish thrones, it looked as if a Scandinavian confederacy was in the making; however, his early death in 1035 cut short any such ambitions—for his empire died with him. His two sons, Harold and Harthacnut, wrangled for the English throne for the next seven years, but neither was able to win the allegiance of the English before they died. In 1042, with Canute's line having ended, the witan turned back to the royal family of Wessex and elected Edward, son of Ethelred the Unready, to the throne. With his reign Anglo-Saxon England shifted its centuries of association from the Germanic and Scandinavian world to the Normans on the French coast.

### Edward the Confessor and the Normans

Half Norman by birth, Edward had spent most of his life in Normandy before attaining the English throne at the age of forty. A religious and retiring figure, he brought with him to England Norman ideas and friends; however, he gave more attention to the church than to the government. The favoritism of this kindly "French monk" toward Norman colleagues aroused the hostility of the Anglo-Saxon nobles, and his childless marriage meant that again there would be a disputed succession to the throne upon his death.

Godwin, earl of Wessex, led the protest and survived banishment to become the leading English heir to the throne. Upon his death in 1053 his four sons dominated royal politics as Edward became more of a recluse. The most powerful and capable of the sons, Harold, succeeded his father as Earl of Wessex and became increasingly popular in the country. King Edward reluctantly named Harold as his successor although he preferred William, duke of Normandy. The witan confirmed Harold as king upon the death of

Edward, but other aspirants disputed Harold's claim and prepared to challenge him for the crown. The foremost challenger was William of Normandy.

The Anglo-Saxon invaders, after their settlement was complete, carved out kingdoms and moved toward political unification under Alfred the Great. Contributing to that unification was the conversion of these invaders to Christianity since the Church provided an ecclesiastical organization common to all England and promoted learning.

The Anglo-Saxon settlement established the fundamental character of Britain and introduced units of local government that lasted, with adaptation, well into modern times. However, the power of royal authority still depended largely on the leadership of a personal monarchy to make it work effectively; it was not yet institutionalized.

With the reign of Edward the Confessor, Anglo-Saxon England shifted its centuries of association from the Scandinavian and Germanic world to the Normans on the French coast and ended its isolation from Continental affairs.

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3

**Norman England and the  
Expansion of Royal  
Government: 1066–1272**

- 1066 William, duke of Normandy, defeats King Harold in the last successful invasion of Britain
- 1086 Domesday Survey of William the Conqueror
- 1100 Henry I recognized as king upon the death of childless William II
- 1153 Treaty of Wallingford provides for Matilda's son, Henry (II), to succeed Stephen as king
- 1154 Henry II, the first of eight Angevin or Plantagenet kings, is crowned
- 1162 Thomas Becket invested as Archbishop of Canterbury
- 1189 Richard I succeeds his father, Henry II, as king
- 1215 King John agrees to demands of his nobles and signs the Magna Charta at Runnymede
- 1258 Provisions of Oxford establish a baronial council and limit the power of Henry III
- 1264 Simon de Montfort defeats Henry III at Battle of Lewes
- 1272 Death of Henry III



**T**he Anglo-Saxon kings gave England some sense of territorial and political unity and a tradition of monarchy over the centuries. The Norman kings introduced the necessary administrative machinery the Anglo-Saxons lacked to permit the king to govern effectively and to build the most tightly organized state in medieval Europe.

Under the Norman and Angevin rulers of Britain the ties with Scandinavia were broken and replaced by a new liaison with the Continent. In these years England was dominated by a French-speaking nobility and a Latin-speaking clergy. Paradoxically, under this foreign leadership, England developed distinctive political and judicial institutions which imitated no foreign models, but instead blended into a new synthesis the old Saxon traditions and the new Norman feudalism and administration. The outcome was the significant growth of royal power and the first effective restraints on its use.

Involvement with the Continent brought England a more effective political and military system, but it also meant that English kings became embroiled in French affairs, often at the expense of the country's interests. This Continental connection began with Edward the Confessor, but gained legitimacy and energy with William of Normandy's successful invasion of England in 1066.

## THE NORMAN CONQUEST

William, duke of Normandy, did not accept the witan's choice of Harold Godwin to succeed Edward as king so he made careful preparations to make good his own claim to the throne. Aided by fortuitous circumstances, he defeated Harold and became king by conquest. The ruling Normans never displaced the Anglo-Saxons as the latter had done with the Britons, because the Normans were too few in number. Nevertheless, they destroyed the old English nobility and maintained their minority rule by a strong central government, the military technique of mounted knights and political feudalism, and the security of fortified castles.

### Norman Rule

The Norman Conquest, unlike the easy yoke imposed on the English lords by Canute, proved to be severe in consequence. William confiscated Saxon estates and gave them to his followers. A monarchy based on political feudalism was transplanted from Normandy where the Duke had already established the most centralized and best administered state in Europe. This political feudalism rested on the allegiance (fealty) exacted from Norman nobles in England in return for land holdings granted by the king.

### WILLIAM'S CLAIM TO THE THRONE

On the death of Edward the Confessor, William claimed the English throne on the grounds that Edward had promised to make him his heir, that Harold, when shipwrecked on the Normandy coast in 1064, had given him a sacred oath of support, and that by Viking descent he was related to the English royal family—he was the first cousin once removed of King Edward, although of illegitimate birth. Furthermore, Pope Alexander II had sanctioned William's aspirations. Strengthened by these claims, the Duke recruited an army of seven thousand and offered his recruits the blessing of the pope and the promise of English estates.

### The Invasion of 1066

King Harold moved his troops to the south coast to meet the anticipated invasion of the Duke of Normandy on the Channel coast. While there Hardrada, king of Norway, another claimant to the throne, landed in Northumbria with the aid of Tostig, King Harold's bitterly hostile brother. Harold rushed north and, in the greatest military triumph of the century, repulsed the invaders at Stamford Bridge near York, killing both Harold Hardrada and Tostig. While King Harold was triumphing in the north, William landed unopposed at Pevensey on the south coast. With no respite Harold returned to the south without waiting for reinforcements and met William's army near Hastings on October 14.

In a pitched battle that lasted through the day, the disciplined Norman archers at last broke through the stubborn defense of the English *housecarls* or regulars. Victory became decisive when the King's two brothers were slain, and a random arrow struck down Harold. The Duke then cautiously moved on toward London, subduing Romney, Dover, and Canterbury en route. When no help was forthcoming from the northern earls, the people of London submitted, and William, the last successful foreign invader of England, was crowned in Westminster Abbey on Christmas Day.

### William the Conqueror

For the next five years William crushed local resistance with a combination of kindness and cruelty and was merciless in punishing the northern rebellions. Fortified castles were built throughout the country, beginning with the Tower of London. Once again, the disunity of Anglo-Saxon England proved its undoing, since the revolts never won more than regional support and only succeeded in distinguishing and decimating the English nobility. William was equally firm in repudiating the political claims of the Papacy. When Pope Gregory VII claimed England as a papal fief, William replied with the Triple Concordat which made royal permission necessary before any papal power could be exercised in England. As long as the Church's demands did not jeopardize his political authority, William permitted the establishment of ecclesiastical courts and helped Lanfranc, the

new Archbishop of Canterbury, increase the administrative centralization of the church.

#### RESULTS OF THE CONQUEST

Although William retained Anglo-Saxon customs that did not conflict with his rule, he introduced many features into royal government that fundamentally altered English life, particularly its power structure. These influential changes included a reformed church which governed its affairs more fully under Continental leadership; a political feudal system based on landholding; a dramatic centralizing of royal power, an increase of commercial activity with the Latin world; and the adoption of the language and manners of the French court. Consequently, there began the five-century involvement of the kings of England with the French empire.

### ANGLO-NORMAN FEUDALISM

William brought with him the political and economic practices of his native Normandy and fastened them on the more loosely structured English society. However, the system came too late to have the stifling effects on the English nation that it had on parts of the Continent. Norman feudalism saved England from the more immediate dangers of anarchy and civil war and gave the country the means of coping with its greatest flaw—a lack of national unity and administration.

#### A Pyramid of Power

William operated on the principle, never claimed by Anglo-Saxon kings, that all the land belonged to him. In theory this meant that no tenant or vassal could be more powerful than the king. In practice, though, they often were more powerful than the king, especially on the Continent. As a case in point, the Duke of Normandy was far more powerful than his lord, the King of France, and defied him with impunity. Therefore, in structuring political feudalism in England, William made sure that no vassal could treat him as he had treated his liege lord in France. He scattered the holdings of his vassals so they could not form consolidated fiefs, such as he held in Normandy, or as Earl Godwin had possessed under Edward the Confessor. He also retained the fyrd as an effective counterforce to the retinues of the lords. By this more centralized structure he overcame the great liability of Continental feudalism—that the parts were greater than the whole.

#### Origins of Feudalism

The roots of feudalism can be traced to the vast villas of Roman days and the half-free *coloni* who worked the land but were not free to leave it. In the early ninth century Charlemagne had granted tracts of land to select

#### Lord and Vassal

subjects and promised them immunity from royal administration. With Charlemagne's death and the collapse of his empire there grew up over the next two hundred years an improvised system of land tenure based on military service. The lord granted a parcel of land to his vassal and in return received homage and knightly military service. Such an arrangement provided local protection from the menace of Viking raids after the weakening royal power of the French kings could no longer guarantee the safety of their subjects. Rival rulers had little money with which to purchase allegiance, but they had much land at their disposal when the empire was divided after Charlemagne's death. This emerging feudal arrangement became, in essence, a political, military, and social relationship between the king (or lord) and his vassals in which one's relationship to the land was the determining factor of rank. The land granted by the lord to his vassal was known as a fief or *feudum* (from which the term *feudal* is derived).

Feudalism under William in England quite quickly became formalized into a contractual relationship on a personal basis between lord (the donor of a parcel of land) and the vassal (the recipient). In England William kept for himself one-fourth of the estates he confiscated from his Anglo-Saxon subjects, gave one-fourth to the Church, and parceled out the remaining land to the barons of his conquering army on the conditions of feudal tenure. As their liege lord William guaranteed his vassals protection and justice. In return they swore their allegiance (homage and fealty) to him and promised to supply annually a specified number of knights for forty days of military service. They were further obligated to entertain the king (or the lord to whom they owed their fealty) on visits, to attend his court, and to pay certain fees, such as bearing the expense of knighting the lord's oldest son or paying the cost of his daughter's marriage.

To strengthen his hold over the barons, William permitted no castles to be built without royal consent, and in the Oath of Salisbury he demanded prime allegiance, not only from his tenants-in-chief, but from all their vassals. This centralization of power was likewise reflected in the continuation of the Daneland and in an elaborate census of the ownership and wealth of the kingdom. On William's orders royal commissioners traveled to every hundred and village and asked detailed questions concerning every manor. The meticulous findings of this statistical survey were recorded in the famous Domesday Book of 1086.

#### WILLIAM AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Although William, as conqueror, remodeled and increased the powers of the central government, he retained many Anglo-Saxon institutions, rather than expose his new subjects unnecessarily to strange laws and customs. His Great Council preserved the function of the Saxon witan, and

the fyrd was a useful check on the military strength of the barons. The machinery of local government continued to function in the shires where royal authority now penetrated effectively for the first time through the office of the sheriff. The sheriff replaced the earl as the official representative of the king. In this way royal power was no longer distant and indirect, but near at hand and visible in each community, since the king gave the sheriffs full administration of local government and control of the local militia. When William died in 1087, he left England its first powerful and well-defined system of government. Even if William was a stern ruler who imposed feudal centralization by force, he was not an absolute ruler, and he did provide more order and security than was customary in Europe at this time.

### *The Manor*

The manor was the economic unit of feudalism. As an agricultural unit it was the part (or the whole) of the fief that the vassal retained for personal use. Like its Anglo-Saxon predecessor, it was practically self-sufficient, with a village, common fields, mill, and blacksmith shop. A major change from Anglo-Saxon days was the reduction of freemen; the Domesday survey classified 84 percent of the rural population as serfs. The manorial relationship between lord and serf was most unequal. In return for some meager protection and facilities, the serf spent most of the day tilling his lord's land or performing other obligations for him; even a percentage of a serf's produce was claimed by the lord. The serf was bound to the soil by law and could not leave the manor without the lord's consent. Any disputes between the serf and the lord were tried in the manorial court presided over by the lord's steward.

## THE REIGNS OF WILLIAM II, HENRY I, AND STEPHEN

William entrusted to his sons and successors a monarchy whose controlling influence was exerted through feudal tenure and baronial service, central administration, and local government. These three pillars of sovereignty were tested in the reigns of the three monarchs that followed King William. During these turbulent years, the power of the barons was checked, public finances were systematized, and justice reformed—all attesting to the growing stability of the English monarchy.

### *Centralization and Disruption*

At first, the efforts of William II and Henry I to increase royal authority were successful. Then under the weak and indecisive Stephen, the barons exploited the situation to break free from royal control, and for nineteen years England was convulsed by baronial rivalries and warring factions. It became clear by the end of Stephen's reign that a strong and effective government based on heredity rather than election was greatly to be preferred over its lack which often brought misery, war and anarchy.

### *William II, 1087-1100*

King William had bequeathed Normandy to his eldest son, Robert; to his second son, William Rufus, he bequeathed the English Crown; to his youngest son, Henry, he left 5,000 marks. A series of minor wars was the outcome of the three brothers quarreling among themselves over their inheritance. William II was an excellent soldier and maintained the strong monarchy inherited from his father, but he was brutal, cruel and cynical in an age of public piety. During this era of the Crusades when Christian rulers sought to reclaim the Holy Land from Muslim control, he openly despised the clergy and disregarded conventional morality. He employed all the powers of the feudal monarchy and feudal courts to extract money from his subjects. He was equally greedy for Church lands and blocked new appointments to vacant bishoprics and abbey, appropriating their revenues for himself. A bitter quarrel ensued with Archbishop Anselm over the respective authority of church and state, an argument that would plague future reigns as well. William's military exploits proved his inherited soldierly qualities as he suppressed two revolts in England and invaded the Welsh and Scottish borders. In this way he kept intact his father's conquests and made it possible for his brother to reunite England with Normandy.

### *Henry I, 1100-1135*

When William II died without a son Henry moved swiftly to gain approval from the royal council before his elder brother, Robert, returned from the Crusades. To hold baronial support Henry promised in his coronation charter to abide by the laws of Edward the Confessor and William I and to halt all unreasonable methods of collecting money from the nobles and the Church. To further strengthen his position, he recalled Archbishop Anselm from exile and married Edith-Matilda, the nearest blood kin of the royal House of Wessex. The year after his coronation Henry repulsed an invasion attempt by Robert and then reciprocated by attacking Normandy and decisively defeating Robert at Tinchebray in 1106—a revenge, said the English, for Hastings. Normandy thereby came under Henry's rule and the rest of his reign was relatively tranquil.

CENTRAL GOVERNMENT UNDER HENRY I

After subduing Normandy, King Henry took advantage of his peaceful reign to reshape the central administration. His flair for organization produced law and order and filled the treasury as he greatly expanded the royal judicial system as well as royal administration through the issuance of hundreds of royal writs.

THE CURIA REGIS

From the Great Council of barons the King selected a small group of administrators, the *curia regis*, and gave them specialized roles. One color became *justiciar*, or chief minister, and was given authority to act in the name of the king. Second in importance was the *chancellor*, who was responsible for the legal and secretarial duties of the government. The office of *treasurer* increased in power, and an account was demanded of all receipts and expenditures.

THE EXCHEQUER

Disputes over tax cases were soon held in a special session of the curia regis called the exchequer, which took its name from the fact that royal accounting was first calculated on a checkered cloth. The staff of the exchequer drafted writs issued from the exchequer, and twice yearly required an audit from sheriffs and other officials who collected money for the king. The exchequer was the first modern accounting practice known in the West. Henry discovered that tight control of expenditures and efficient administration brought greater revenues. His reign is often seen as the "seedbed of the modern state" and the "coming of age of the royal administration."

In time the Exchequer Court became a separate common law court. To raise more money Henry allowed the barons to make a money payment (*scutage*) in place of contributing knights as required by the feudal code. He also increased the business and revenue of royal courts by sending itinerant judges on circuit; he thus turned the local courts into royal courts and permitted royal justice and authority to reach into every local hamlet.

Henry's hopes for his dynasty were jeopardized when his only legitimate son, William, drowned in 1120 crossing the Channel. He made the barons swear allegiance to his daughter, Matilda, and then promptly had her married to fifteen-year old Geoffrey of Anjou without the barons' consent. On Henry's death the barons chose his nephew, Stephen of Blois, as king, and

Stephen versus  
Matilda,  
1135-1154

\* C. Warren Hollister, *The Making of England, 55 B.C. to 1399*. (Lexington: D. C. Heath, 1988), p. 135.

HENRY II AND THE COMMON LAW

a disputed succession began. Stephen was mild and chivalrous, but utterly unable to rule his kingdom. In many respects he was just the opposite of his father. Only by increasing concessions to the barons and to the Church was he able to maintain his title. The country was racked by civil war and lawlessness for nineteen long years until the warring factions signed the Treaty of Wallingford (1153), providing for Matilda's son, Henry, to succeed Stephen. The next year Stephen died.

Restoration of  
Royal Power

When Henry II, the first of eight Angevin or Plantagenet kings, came to the throne in 1154 at the age of twenty-one, he also inherited an impressive empire on the Continent. The extent of his possessions meant that Henry was in England only thirteen of the thirty-five years of his reign. Very much like his grandfather, Henry I, the young king with energy, vision, and charisma extended the administrative and legal reforms of that earlier reign. His attention to England's legal system made his reign especially noteworthy in the development of the fundamental features of common law. Along with Alfred, Edward I, and Elizabeth I, he ranks as one of the greatest of Britain's monarchs.

King Henry had inherited from his parents Normandy, Touraine, and Maine. At nineteen he had married Eleanor of Aquitaine, who had divorced King Louis VII of France to wed him. She brought as her dowry Aquitaine and Toulouse. To these possessions, totaling nearly half of France, Henry added the overlordship of Wales, Ireland and Scotland. Although Henry never conquered Scotland, Anglo-Norman institutions flooded the country in the twelfth century to replace the Celtic system of land tenure and administration. In Ireland, Henry's vassal Strongbow (the Welsh Richard of Clare, earl of Pembroke) plundered Ireland and with abandon. By 1200 Anglo-Normans governed two-thirds of Ireland and imposed their feudal system upon the defeated Irish.

Within England Henry's first task was to restore order and authority where royal power had dangerously eroded during Stephen's reign. Henry regained Crown lands by revoking the royal grants of lands and offices that had been made during Stephen's reign and by ordering the demolition of hundreds of unlicensed castles. The return to the peace of a strong central government was helped by the object lesson that Stephen's misrule had made on his subjects.

## ROYAL REVENUE

To maintain his vast holdings Henry II needed increased revenues. To secure more income he restored the exchequer to the position of prominence it held under Henry I, extended scutage to lay nobles and hired mercenaries with the money raised, and levied an income and personal property tax (the Saladin tax) on everyone not embarking on the Second Crusade.

## Common Law

Between them Henry I and Henry II enormously expanded royal jurisdiction at the expense of feudal and local justice. Henry II picked up the old Roman concept of the king as legislator and brought new meaning and influence to the monarchy. Once Henry had consolidated his holdings, he turned his attention to administration and judicial reform. Here his passion for organization and efficiency resulted in better justice and a wider respect for royal authority. The outcome was a distinctive legal system known as English common law that became one of the great legal traditions of the world and the basis for the American legal system. Judges selected the best of local laws and customs and applied them to the whole realm. In time this provided uniform laws for England by which a disputed question of law was decided by legal precedent. This accent on judge-made law and trial by jury led to the position that the law was supreme, and even the king could not disregard it. On the Continent, in contrast, Roman law became the dominant legal concept.

The King's  
Justices

Henry II wished to make English justice more uniform and to minimize the overlap and confusion prevailing in various courts. Itinerant judges became trustworthy agents of the Crown as King Henry increased their jurisdiction and introduced courts into every county. The expansion of royal justice made access to the courts easier for the people and at the same time curtailed the power and jurisdiction of the local sheriff or baron. Judges sent on circuit had the sole right to hear murder charges. In the Assize (county court session) of Northampton (1176) the powers of the royal judges were increased to try all criminals.

With the expansion of royal jurisdiction, there arose a broader interpretation for royal decrees and ordinances (any offense on the "king's highway" was an offense against the Crown). In civil cases the extension of the royal writ increased the business of royal courts. In Norman times only exceptional suits which involved the king's friends could secure a royal writ which ordered the case to be tried in royal courts instead of local courts. Under Henry II new writs were introduced, and any freeman who had a suit which fit any of these judicial forms could pay a fee for a royal writ and secure a trial in a royal court with a better chance of justice being rendered. Royal writs became popular and royal courts expanded rapidly.

## THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE JURY

Henry II did not introduce trial by jury but he made it an integral part of the royal judicial procedure. The jury evolved in Western Christendom from sworn inquests ordered by the kings whereby a group of men were placed under oath and ordered to provide truthful information. At the Assize of Clarendon (1166) King Henry expanded the practice and ordered that juries of twelve men in each hundred moot at county court sessions were to denounce criminals in their neighborhood; such groups were called presentment or accusing juries (the origin of the grand jury). Trial by jury was also introduced in assizes to decide disputes over ownership of land. In time, trial by jury replaced all other types of trials and, by the thirteenth century, it was extended to criminal cases through the efforts of the Church. The jury was more likely to provide a rational and just decision than trial by ordeal or compurgation, and in later centuries it became an invaluable safeguard of civil liberties.

## PROPERTY LAW

In civil cases King Henry introduced the writ of right which ordered a feudal lord to provide justice for the plaintiff or the king would step into the case through the sheriff. The writ of praecipe ignored the feudal court; it ordered the sheriff to command the restoration of land to the plaintiff or have the defendant appear in royal court to explain his failure to comply. Both of these laws were encroachments on the baronial courts.

## CHURCH AND STATE

The Church's authority had grown greatly in the century preceding Henry II's reign. Powerful popes, the increasing stature of canon law, and a religious revival that resulted in the erection of thousands of churches in eleventh-century Europe had won for the Church wider spheres of influence. In England King Stephen had made major concessions to the Church to keep its backing. In his efforts to reform the legal system, Henry now ran into conflict with the Church over the jurisdiction of secular and ecclesiastical courts.

**Constitutions of Clarendon, 1164.** The Church courts had extended their jurisdiction to include the right to try all cases involving the clergy, whatever the offense. The privilege of "benefit of clergy" was often claimed by anyone who could read or speak Latin, since the penalties of the Church courts were usually very lenient. To define the respective powers of Church and government, Henry drew up a statement called the Constitutions of Clarendon. It decreed, among its sixteen articles, that accused clergy could continue to be tried in Church courts, but, if they were found guilty of criminal offenses, they would be turned over to the secular courts for punishment. Inspired by the opposition of Thomas Becket, the newly ap-



pointed Archbishop of Canterbury, the bishops were most reluctant to agree to the Constitutions; however, they yielded when it became obvious that Becket's case was futile.

Thomas Becket, Becket had served as chancellor with such distinction that Henry II nominated him for the vacant archbishopric in 1162. To Henry's angry amazement the investiture turned his former close ally into an adamant champion of the Church. Archbishop Becket's stubborn resistance to the Clarendon reforms resulted in his exile. After the pope threatened Henry with excommunication and a papal interdict on England that would have forbidden most Christian sacraments and burials in the country, a reconciliation was arranged between the two antagonists.

Again, the unbending archbishop provoked Henry's anger by refusing to absolve the bishops who had participated in the coronation ceremonies of the king's son. This time four overzealous knights, thinking they were doing King Henry a service, took the law into their own hands and murdered Becket on the altar steps of Canterbury. The murder canonized Becket and brought public humiliation to Henry. The king tried to make atonement by visiting Becket's tomb as a penitent and embarking on a crusade to conquer Ireland for the Church. Nevertheless, Henry could not pursue his reform of the Church courts and was obligated to withdraw some of the terms of the Constitutions. In the long run most of his demands were upheld and the expansion of the Church courts was halted.

### *Henry and His Sons*

Henry II had far more success ruling his kingdom than his own family. His infidelities and his authoritarian manner contributed to his wife, Eleanor, and their four sons at one time or another all plotting with his enemies to unsettle him. This ingratitude and treachery was all the more marked because of Henry's generosity and affection for his children. Two sons, Henry and Geoffrey, died before their father, but Richard and John continued plotting until King Henry's death. In 1188 Richard and King Philip Augustus of France attacked Henry and forced humiliating terms on him the following year. When his favorite son, John, also betrayed him, Henry died, a broken man.

### *The Angevin Empire*

Efforts to hold together Henry II's dominions on both sides of the Channel demanded a skillful and powerful ruler. This Henry was, and his continuous travel permitted him to transplant effective governmental procedures from one region to another. Yet Henry was forced to spend most of his time outside England protecting his domains from rebellion and the schemes of the French king. Under his less skillful successors these landholdings in France became a liability, for they claimed too much attention and depleted the treasury. King Richard the Lion-Hearted spent most of his reign in France and died besieging a castle. John lost Normandy,

## MAGNA CHARTA

Poitou, and Anjou to the King of France. These defeats broke up the Angevin empire although Henry III made feeble efforts to recapture these legacies. In the Treaty of Paris (1259), Henry III finally renounced his right to Normandy, Anjou, Poitou, Touraine, and Maine. Not until the Hundred Years' War would English rule again become so involved in French territories.

Henry II had provided the administrative and judicial machinery for a strong central government that had few restraints other than the feudal contract and the customary laws and practices of the realm to prevent the misuse of royal power. When King John abused his coronation and feudal oaths, the barons' only option was sullen acquiescence or insurrection. Eventually they took up arms and in 1215 they forced John to sign a written guarantee of customary and feudal obligations. In the short run the charter was looked upon largely as a feudal document that strengthened the position of the barons and reminded the king that there were certain limitations to his power. In time the charter became part of the common law and was enshrined as a symbol of the supremacy of law and the written guarantee of certain legal and political rights.

### *The Reign of Richard, 1189-1199*

It was a tribute to the administrative structure which Henry II had set up that England survived intact the reign of King Richard, who, in fact, did little for England. Richard was only in the kingdom for six months of his ten-year reign, and then chiefly to raise money to continue his fighting abroad. A warrior-knight, who became a legendary symbol of romantic chivalry, Richard had little interest in routine administration, preferring to farm out his royal privileges to his brother, Prince John, and the wealthy barons in return for money. Richard's heroic military adventures on the Third Crusade and later in France against Philip Augustus won him glory but consumed his subjects' money. While the king was out of the country, the government was in the hands of Prince John, who took advantage of Richard's absence to win power for himself. However, John was thwarted by Richard's supporters, led by the two justiciars, William Longchamps and Hubert Walter, who were protecting Richard's interests. (These years form the period of time in which the tales of Robin Hood are based.) But the barons were no longer on the defensive as they were in the reign of Henry II, and emboldened by the lack of royal leadership, they challenged the encroachments of the central government.



**Reign of John,  
1199-1216**

Richard's empty treasury, the restive barons and a war in France were the legacies John acquired when he won the throne he had so long coveted. Often called England's "worst king," John was a victim of his own character and of circumstances. Although he was courageous and clever, he had the knack of alienating nearly everyone by his cruelty, greed, and failure to honor his word. Above all, he was unsuccessful in every venture he handled, partly because he had the bad luck of being pitted against two of the most powerful figures of the Middle Ages: Philip Augustus of France and Pope Innocent III.

**JOHN AND THE KING OF FRANCE**

King John had secured the annulment of his childless marriage and was planning to wed a Portuguese princess, but he fell in love with a fourteen-year-old French girl, Isabella of Angoulême, who was betrothed to one of his vassals. Undaunted by the betrothal he married her, only to have Hugh the Brown, the jilted fiancé, appeal to King Philip II for justice. In order to resolve the situation the King of France, as John's suzerain (according to feudal custom, since John held Normandy, Anjou, and Aquitaine as fiefs, he was a vassal of the French king), summoned him to stand trial. When John refused to appear, Philip pronounced the forfeiture of all his French domains. John's reputation was sullied even more by his probably accomplice in the murder of his nephew, Arthur, a rival claimant to the throne. By 1204 John lost all the Plantagenet empire north of the Loire River; only Aquitaine remained unconquered. Repeated defeats had damaged the king's prestige. To obtain revenue to avenge these losses John extracted money from the barons by old and new taxes, feudal levies, and arbitrary impositions.

As his next antagonist King John unfortunately challenged the powerful Pope Innocent III. John and the monks of Canterbury had chosen rival candidates as archbishop of Canterbury upon the death of Hubert Walter (1205). Innocent rejected both candidates and picked a third, Stephen Langton. Enraged, John refused to accept Langton and confiscated the revenues of the seat of Canterbury; thereupon, Innocent placed England under an interdict (1208) halting all Church services. John retaliated by persecuting the clergy and seizing Church property. Innocent threatened to depose the king. Although the Pope's decrees did not hurt John immediately, they encouraged his enemies, particularly the disaffected barons and Philip Augustus of France. When Philip prepared to invade England with the Pope's blessing, John had no recourse but to submit to Innocent (1213). The king accepted Langton as archbishop, restored the confiscated Church properties, and relinquished England and English-ruled eastern Ireland to the Pope to receive them back as fiefs of Rome. Saved from invasion and

**JOHN AND THE POPE****Magna Charta**

**JOHN AND THE BARONS**

In 1214 after his plans to defeat Philip collapsed, King John asked for another scutage from his nobles; however, the barons refused to comply. Instead they referred to the charter of Henry I as precedent and demanded that John sign a new charter listing his and their feudal rights and obligations and that he abide by such contractual rights. The barons had felt their position threatened ever since the galloping centralization of Henry II. Confronted with an inept king who had misused royal powers and upset the feudal balance, about half of the barons were prepared, in their own self-interest, to challenge John.

Without doubt John had abused his feudal prerogatives by charging excessive fees for relief of feudal duties, forcing marriage on female wards, and imprisoning families of recalcitrant barons; but he was quite indifferent to the fact. In the negotiations that followed, Archbishop Langton served as mediator between the king and his subjects. John delayed and schemed, but could not win over either the barons, the churchmen, or the people of London. On June 15, 1215, at Runnymede he agreed to their demands and signed the Magna Charta.

The sixty-three clauses of the charter lacked sweeping statements of political doctrine but dealt primarily with feudal grievances and legal protection. Specific abuses in John's use of warship, relief, and scutage were to end and no extraordinary taxes were to be levied without consent of the Great Council—the germ for later claims of no taxation without representation. Protection from arbitrary arrest was strengthened by clause thirty-nine, making it unlawful to arrest a freeman "except by the lawful judgment of his peers or by the law of the land." A committee of twenty-five barons was to make sure the agreement was honored by the king. If he did not, they were entitled to check the king by force of arms. Other clauses dealt with the ancient liberties of London, the rights of merchants, and weights and measures.

**Importance of the Charter.** This charter was a much broader confirmation of rights and privileges than the charter of Henry I. Nevertheless, its detailed provisions were essentially feudal and soon became dated. Certainly John had no intention of honoring it and within four months was preparing for war against the barons. Over the centuries, however, the charter became increasingly meaningful and a part of common law as attested by its confirmation forty times in later reigns. The written confirmation of mutual contractual rights and privileges proved that the king could be brought to terms and that dissident factions could join together and negotiate peacefully.

With the Pope now on his side, John took the offensive against Philip but he had not yet won back the support of his barons.

with the king. Later, commoners would use the same method and demand redress of grievances before passing laws desired by the king. Underlying the charter were two principles upon which English constitutionalism and the modern concept of a limited monarchy grew. First, the king was not above all law, but was limited by the prescribed laws of his realm, and, second, if the king flouted the contractual relationships by unilateral action, his subjects reserved the right to force him to observe the laws.

**Civil War.** Since King John signed the charter as a politically expedient move, he immediately repudiated it and marched against the insurgents in October 1215. Thereupon the barons of the north offered the Crown to Louis, son of King Philip. While John was attempting to quench this political rebellion, French invasion forces occupied London. Only John's sudden death a year later from over-indulgence in food and drink spared England a full-scale civil war.

## HENRY III AND THE BARONS

King John's death the year after the signing of the Magna Charta initiated the long reign (1216-1272) of his nine-year old son, Henry III. Henry resembled Edward the Confessor in his piety and simplicity and is consigned, rather appropriately, by the Italian poet, Dante, to the purgatory of children and simpletons. Intimidated by both his French relatives and the papacy, Henry had the misfortune of being cast as an "un-English" King in an age of rising English patriotism. In the ensuing experiments in forms of government the parliamentary idea seemed to hold the widest appeal.

### Foreign Influence on Henry's Reign

During King Henry's minority the nobles rallied around the Crown and eventually drove Prince Louis and the French out of England. First William Marshall and later Hubert de Burgh—the last of the great justiciars—served as regents for the young King. Five years after coming of age he dismissed the masterful de Burgh (1232) and revealed his own administrative incompetence when he became sole ruler. He quickly became dependent upon French advisors and Henry's reign became largely a feud between English and non-English factions. During these years Henry was lured into a foolish and costly foreign policy that won him nothing but heavy debts. He tried and failed to reconquer the Angevin empire. Even more expensive was the papal scheme to award the throne of the Two Sicilies to Henry's second son, Edmund, in return for substantial military and financial obligations. Nothing came of this farfetched project but yet another serious drain on the royal treasury.

### FAMILY FAVORITES

King Henry alienated many of his subjects by replacing de Burgh with Peter des Roches of Poitou. The new justiciar's financial reforms and his dismissal of the sheriffs provoked the English barons. More foreign advisors came in the train of Henry's charming and clever bride, Eleanor of Provence. She found posts for eight uncles and many fortune-seeking relations. In 1220 the king's widowed mother remarried and provided Henry with four half-brothers to keep in royal style.

### PAPAL POWER

The papacy exploited Henry's subservience to the point that finally the English clergy united with the barons against the Pope and the King. Financial demands upon the English Church were so exorbitant that one-fifth of its income was earmarked for Rome. Next the Pope filled vacancies in the English Church with Italian clerics, many of whom never bothered to visit England, but nevertheless drew good incomes from their posts.

### Law and Administration Under Henry III

Participation in the business of government broadened in the thirteenth century as rising affluence drew more and more knights, burghers, and landholders into the functions of the local and central government. Centralized government had come to stay. The question during the Angevin dynasty was: Who should control it? Royal administration and royal law grew incrementally and by the end of the century a rather comprehensive legal system was in place and the royal courts of King's Bench, Common Pleas, and Exchequer were staffed by professional judges for the first time. The great thirteenth-century jurist, Henry de Bracton provided a philosophical and systematic interpretation for these royal courts and common law in his legal treatise, *On the Laws and Customs of England*.

Constitutionally these years were a time when the country was seeking to find workable political institutions that would permit the exercise of royal authority but also obligate the monarch to live within the customary law of the realm and not above it. To be an effective and accepted ruler the king increasingly needed to listen to and be in cooperation with the politically conscious "community of the realm." As Henry's reign progressed, he more and more governed without baronial advice and counsel. In 1258 the barons moved from idle grumbling about Henry's foreign advisors and his arbitrary rule to open defiance and brought about a coup d'état that transferred many of the powers of the king to a baronial oligarchy.

### PROVISIONS OF OXFORD, 1258

At Oxford the disaffected baronial faction defied the King's efforts to increase taxes and forced upon him an ordinance which established a baronial council of fifteen to run the government in the king's name. Foreign

favorites were to be dismissed and the Great Council—now also called a “parliament”—was to meet three times a year. These revolutionary proposals limited the powers of the king but failed to find any acceptable alternative to the royal administrative machinery that would win wide support. Soon the barons quarreled among themselves and Henry, learning nothing, reassessed his authority. When both the Pope and Louis IX of France backed Henry, civil war broke out in 1264.

### Simon de Montfort

Leading the disaffected baronial party was Henry's French brother-in-law, Simon de Montfort, who as Earl of Leicester had championed the

Provisions of Oxford successfully. He now demonstrated his military abilities and defeated King Henry and his son, Edward, at the battle of Lewes (1264). The next year, Montfort, as *de facto* ruler, summoned to London a parliament that he hoped would replace the monarchy with an enlightened oligarchy. To broaden his support he included all the elements of future parliaments by requesting two knights from each county and two citizens from each friendly borough to meet with the Lords, thereby making this parliament the most representative body convoked before Edward I's Parliament of 1295. However, Montfort's scheme fell through as the barons became suspicious of each other and the break from royal rule seemed too radical to digest. In 1265 the royal army led by Prince Edward, who had escaped from imprisonment, defeated the rebellious barons and killed Montfort at the battle of Evesham. The revolutionary idea of abolishing the monarchy had failed and with Montfort's demise vanished the last of the influential Frenchmen who shaped English policy.

### DEATH OF HENRY III

In 1266 King Henry once again confirmed the Magna Charta. Now in his old age, gradually turned over control of the government to his son, Edward, who was astute enough to learn the lessons that Montfort's disaffection taught. Five years later the King died while his son was crusading. Henry III had been able to survive the barons' efforts to replace him, but, like his father, he had been forcibly brought to account for his misrule. Most of his heirs and his subjects never quite forgot that fact.

**T**he North Sea, rather than the English Channel or the Atlantic, was the hub of British links with Europe for six centuries. In 1066 the Norman invasion and Continental Catholicism changed all this and thereafter deeply involved the Norman and Angevin kings in Continental politics, often at the expense of the country's interests.

The Norman Conquest was one of the turning points in English history. A series of strong Norman kings revolutionized England's power structure and molded English institutions with Norman feudalism to exalt the authority of the king and central administration of government. Especially under Henry I and Henry II an effective royal judiciary and central administration flourished and the fundamental features of common law became institutionalized. The unfettered growth of royal authority was checked by the Magna Charta and other written guarantees of certain rights and restrictions of the king and his subjects. The supremacy of law, even over the king, began to take shape as an important part of the nation's constitutional history far ahead of any similar developments on the Continent.

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Medieval Society

- 1054 Division of Catholicism into Eastern and Western Churches
- ca. 1090 Norman architecture appears in England
- 1096 The First Crusade is launched to wrest the Holy Land from Turkish rule
- 1129 The Cistercian Order reaches England
- ca. 1167 Founding of Oxford University with the first Oxford college, Merton, formally established in 1264
- ca. 1170 Birth of Robert Grosseteste, leading scholar and churchman of thirteenth-century Britain
- ca. 1180 Gothic architecture reaches England
- 1221 Dominican Order, founded by St. Dominic, arrives in Britain
- 1224 Franciscan Order of mendicant monks, founded by St. Francis, arrives in Britain
- 1267-1268 Roger Bacon writes *Opus Maius*
- 1284 First Cambridge college, Peterhouse, is founded

During the twelfth and thirteenth centuries the Roman Catholic Church acquired its greatest authority and influence. Western Christendom still spoke a common language, Latin, taught a single faith, and brought together rival monarchs for the Crusades to the Holy Land. Only within the religious and cultural bonds of Christendom did Europe find the unity it so conspicuously lacked in political affairs.

The Norman Conquest had identified England more directly with medieval European civilization, and the country benefited greatly from the attachment. However, national stirrings made England one of the first countries to show the marks of a separate and unique identity. During the central years of the Middle Ages (1000-1300) there occurred a visible awakening of Europe's intellectual and artistic energies. These years witnessed the rise of universities and the building of magnificent cathedrals. Distinguished theologians and philosophers of the age successfully reconciled faith and reason within an ordered structure of society that symbolized medieval civilization at its height.

THE CRUSADES

In Britain and in Europe the influence of the Crusades was profound and reflected the magnitude of religious fervor of this period. Although the original goals of converting the "Muslim infidels" and reconquering the Holy Land failed, several unanticipated consequences of these religious wars were of great importance.

Appeal of the Crusades

Among the various motives that stirred the Crusaders to action were: (1) the capture of the Holy Land by the Turks and the ensuing mistreatment of Christians on pilgrimages to Jerusalem; (2) the hope of the papacy to reunite the Eastern Church which had separated from the Roman Catholic Church in 1054; (3) the influence of powerful preachers, like Peter the Hermit, who could persuade the laity into believing that the Crusades were the will of God; and (4) the promise of material reward and foreign adventure for nobles and knights joining a crusade.

SCOPE OF THE CRUSADES

The Crusades began in 1096 and continued intermittently for two centuries. The First Crusade (1096-1099) wrested the Holy Land from the Turks and set up feudal Christian kingdoms; no later Crusade achieved any comparable military success. The Second Crusade (1147-1150) failed to recover ground lost to the Muslim reconquest. The Third Crusade (1189-1192), led by Richard I of England, Frederick Barbarossa (the Holy Roman Emperor), and Philip Augustus of France, hoped to retake Jerusalem from Saladin, Sultan of Egypt and Syria. Richard was successful in his siege of Acre, but returned to England when he found his forces insufficient to attack Jerusalem. Numerous other Crusades followed, although not all were fought against the Turks. Some were sidetracked into sacking Constantinople—as the Fourth in 1204—or fighting the Albigenses, the Christian heretics in

France. Gradually, the Crusades lost their appeal and momentum as the original spirit and fervor that motivated the Crusaders became vague or expired.

#### RESULTS OF THE CRUSADES

When the Turks recaptured Acre, the last stronghold of the Christians,

in 1291, the hopes of reuniting Christendom or assuring Christian rule in the Holy Land were abandoned. Despite these failures the results of the Crusades were significant. The very failure of the Crusaders to break the Muslim barrier to overland trade with the East forced Europe to seek new sea routes to the Orient. When these were discovered, Britain's maritime location would put it in an excellent position for trade. Other indirect results included the increase in royal power in England because of the absence, and frequently the death, of recalcitrant barons on a crusade; a broadening of British cultural horizons by the fruitful contact with the learning, history, and inventions (gunpowder, paper) of the East; a remarkable growth in towns and commerce which had the effect of increasing the circulation of money and raising prices; and the adoption of new methods of warfare, especially the techniques of fortification and siege that were employed by the Muslims in the Near East. More important, the Crusades contributed a visible sense of national identity. For many Englishmen the expedition to the Holy Land was their first trip away from their local community. They forgot their parochialism in a foreign land and took pride in being identified as Englishmen.

### MONKS AND FRIARS

The Christian Church probably had a greater hold upon the minds and actions of people in the Middle Ages than any time before or since. To the medieval world, the men and women who prayed and cared for body and soul were as indispensable a part of society as those who fought or tilled the soil. The twelfth century became the golden age of the monasteries, to be followed in the next century by the arrival of the mendicant orders.

#### English Monasticism

The Norman Conquest had produced few changes in monastic life, since the French abbots continued the ways of their Anglo-Saxon predecessors. Lanfranc (1069-1089) and Anselm (1093-1109), the two outstanding monks who became archbishops of Canterbury, had introduced the religious devotion and rigorous standards of Bec Abbey. In twelfth-century Britain monasticism achieved its greatest expansion and influence. There were eighty-eight religious houses in England in 1100; a century later, nearly four

hundred. In 1066 one-sixth of the land was owned by monasteries; by the death of King John (1216), between a quarter and a third. For the first time an order for women who wished to live communally was created in the twelfth century. By 1189 it had fourteen houses with 960 nuns. As original monastic ideals invariably became tarnished by excessive wealth and a laxity of spiritual devotion and discipline, reform movements arose to give new life to the orders.

#### THE CISTERCIAN ORDER

Most of the earlier monastic foundations in England were Benedictine houses. Among the new or reforming orders the Cistercians made the greatest impact on Britain. The Cistercian order was founded in 1098 at Cîteaux by Robert of Molesme and Stephen Harding. The latter, an Englishman, wrote the famous Cistercian constitution, *Carta Caritatis* (Rule of Love). Early in the twelfth century Cistercian foundations appeared in Surrey and Yorkshire. Insisting on the simplicity and austerity envisioned by Saint Benedict, the monks built their foundations in isolated fields, cultivated crops, and reared prize-winning sheep.

#### THE MENDICANT ORDERS

In the thirteenth century more religious orders appeared. These hoped to avoid the pitfalls of previous communities that became preoccupied with the successful administration of their holdings. Rather than separating themselves in cloistered abbeys, the *freres* or friars lived in the world to convert sinners. They upheld their spiritual values by observance of a common rule and the rejection of worldly possessions, thus becoming known as the *mendicant*, or begging, orders. The Franciscans (founded by Saint Francis in 1210) emphasized a life of service to the poor and sick through good works and charity. The Dominicans (founded in 1216 by Saint Dominic, a Spanish scholar) set out in 1221 and the Franciscans in 1224. Both orders gained popularity because of their zealous endeavor, their devotion, and the simplicity of their lives. Two other begging orders, the Augustinians and the Carmelites, followed. Then, like the monks before them, the four orders, in time, frequently neglected the rules which had made them great.

#### DECLINE OF THE RELIGIOUS ORDERS

The increase in power and possessions, which had caused laxity in the earlier monastic orders, also affected the begging friars who grew "too well fed" and disregarded their vows of poverty and obedience. Contemporary critics like Walter Map and Matthew Paris lamented the greed and immorality found in religious communities. Yet the monasteries continued to run schools, to offer hospitality to travelers, and to administer relief to the



sick and poor. Eventually, the schools and hospitals which became dominant in the fields of education and social service were founded outside the pale of the monasteries. As a result, great scholars and Church leaders were no longer monks by necessity. Up to the year 1189 all archbishops of Canterbury, except Becket, had come from the monastic orders; after that date only three regular clergy became archbishops.

## LEARNING, LITERATURE, AND ARCHITECTURE

Long before the intellectual renaissance of the twelfth century—with its establishment of new schools, deeper study of law, logic, and classical literature, and new spirit of inquiry—the English Church had promoted education. Until the thirteenth century the Church was for all practical purposes the exclusive patron of the liberal arts. Gradually new schools were opened independent of the monasteries, and instead of scholars moving to monasteries, churchmen now studied at Oxford and Cambridge. Norman and Gothic architecture expressed most visibly the creativity, the power, and the mystery of medieval Christianity.

### The New Universities

A direct result of the intellectual revival was the rise of universities in Europe in the twelfth century. These schools at first consisted of teachers and students with few, if any, buildings. When either the teachers or students organized a guild for the purpose of administering their academic affairs, a university came into existence. These universities were characterized by a cosmopolitan student body, faculties of teachers who had master's degrees, and specialization in either law, medicine, or theology. Respected schools or guilds existed in Exeter, Lincoln, and Winchester. The first "university," however, was founded at Oxford when a quarrel between Henry II and Becket caused English students to leave the University of Paris and form a *studium generale* at Oxford around 1167. In the next century a fight between townsfolk and students at Oxford contributed to a segment of the academic community migrating to Cambridge. The first Oxford college, Merton, was formally established in 1264, and the first Cambridge college, Peterhouse, twenty years later. By the end of the thirteenth century Oxford had a body of students and masters numbering around 1500.

### Writers and Scholars

Western civilization is indebted to the monastic scribes who preserved and copied classical manuscripts and who recorded almost all the chronicles. The abbey of St. Albans was particularly important; here, Roger Wendover

and Matthew Paris wrote a detailed account of the period of Henry III in the *Flowers of History*. Other noteworthy chroniclers who described their times were William of Malmesbury (b. 1125), William of Newbury (b. 1160), and Roger of Hovedon (b. 1200). Geoffrey of Monmouth (1150) was a Welsh bishop who sketched the chivalry of the era in his collection of Celtic legends which idealized King Arthur. Archbishops Lanfranc and Anselm were important scholars in the twelfth century. John of Salisbury, the foremost platonist (a follower of the Greek philosopher Plato, who taught that true knowledge comes from transcendent ideas) of the age, wrote a defense of logic and in *Politicus* described the government, culture, and ethics of the times. Two Oxford scholars, Robert Grosseteste and Roger Bacon, gained fame in the thirteenth century. Grosseteste, first chancellor of Oxford University, was a mathematician, physicist, and theologian who often directed his charges against the pope and King Henry III. His writings include the *Compendium Scientiarum*. Grosseteste's pupil at Oxford, Roger Bacon, was a brilliant and independent thinker who promoted the inductive and experimental method in the study of science and mathematics. This approach ran counter to the methods of the scholastics, who were attempting to reconcile reason and religious doctrine through deductive logic. Bacon's *Opus Majus* was a veritable encyclopedia of knowledge, with treatises on philosophy, physics, mathematics, logic, and grammar. Henry de Bracton (d. 1268) was England's outstanding medieval jurist. His *Laws and Customs of England* is still considered the finest exposition of the laws of England in the Middle Ages.

### Architecture

The artistic dimension in medieval England was most beautifully expressed in church architecture. Sixteen of England's present cathedrals (including Canterbury, Lincoln, Durham, Chester, and Gloucester) were originally monastic churches built by men serving both as artists and craftsmen. The architects of Durham Cathedral solved a major problem of medieval architecture—the construction and support of a ribbed vault, oblong in plan over a central aisle. The Norman Conquest introduced Norman architecture, an adaptation of *Romanesque*, with sturdy, massive design, semicircular arches, and flat buttresses. *Gothic* architecture reached England in the reign of Henry II and soon developed distinctive variations: *Early English* (ca. 1180–1280) with a steeply-pitched roof, lancet windows and pointed arches; *Decorated Gothic* (ca. 1280–1380) with broader windows and embellished spires; and the *Perpendicular* (ca. 1380–1530) with square towers and flat-pointed arches. New architectural styles were also reflected in castles that incorporated stronger fortifications with round towers and curved walls—an idea brought back by the Crusaders. The manor houses of the country gentry changed little in this period; their central feature remained the great hall.



## THE RISE OF TOWNS

Feudal law protected the baron and his farm laborers, but the town dwellers also began to insist on their rights. Those who did not fit into the feudal framework formed separate communities and set up their own laws and regulations. These corporations of burghesses, craftsmen, or students played an increasingly important role in the changing economy and society of England, a society that became more wealthy and doubled its population to about 3 million persons between 1100 and 1300.

### The Boroughs

During the early Middle Ages town life was replaced by the manor and its closed domestic economy. Then in the eleventh and twelfth centuries town life began to revive as a result of better security, the rise of a money economy, and the expansion of commerce and trade both within the country and with foreign countries. The contacts with the Angevin empire, the immigration of Jews, and the Crusades spurred commercial activities. By 1300 towns and boroughs had doubled to more than one hundred, but London with its 40,000 inhabitants remained the only city of any size.

### Political Status

Since the time of William the Conqueror every town was subservient to a local lord and the townspeople were under the jurisdictions of the manor court and the sheriff. Gradually the burghesses bargained for special privileges and bought charters from the king or their landlords. Like the monasteries and colleges, these free towns became independent corporations with the rights to own property, to raise taxes, to hold court, and to elect a mayor and councilors in place of a royal official. They could also deal directly with the king like any important vassal. Since the rising middle class in the boroughs had wealth, one of the quickest ways for a monarch to raise money was to sell borough charters that granted one or more of these rights. The citizens of the borough determined voting and legal rights and participated in government; whereas in the county only the nobility had influence.

### MERCHANT GUILDS

The first important guild was composed of the leading merchants of the town, who regulated trade and protected the vendor and the buyer against excessive competition. This meant selling at a just price to the consumer and protecting the local merchant from outside competition. Guild economic policy opposed an open market and free competition. The policy, in turn, kept the economy from fluctuating by avoiding any sharp rise or fall in prices since both the middlemen and speculators were restricted by guild laws.

## The Medieval Community

Since the medieval world thought in terms of communities rather than of individuals, whatever rights existed were as part of the community. The greatest unifying force was the Church. The concept of *Corpus Christianum* made possible the Church's dominant role in the shaping of society, and for education, literature, and government to be so intimately identified with churchmen. Within this ecclesiastical framework more specific communities developed. The feudal arrangement provided laws and privileges for the warrior, landlord, and, indirectly, the serf. When all segments of society could no longer fit into this military and agricultural structure, clergy, universities and townsfolk found security in their own associations and insisted on their own rights. Thus when the House of Commons emerged, it did so as a house of communities representing counties, towns, and universities.

### CONSEQUENCES OF THE RISE OF TOWNS

Townsmen practicing the same craft, such as carpentry or tanning, developed craft guilds which regulated admission to the trade and also the quality of workmanship. The guild included the master of the trade and his apprentices, who could anticipate becoming master craftsmen by serving the required seven-year apprenticeship. By the fifteenth century the fees for the mastership became so excessive and the masters so exclusive that many expert craftsmen could not set up their own shop. They continued as hired workmen or journeymen for a master and formed a separate guild or "trade union" to protect their interests.

The revival of town life brought about several significant developments. (1) Wealth was no longer only in land; liquid capital was becoming important. (2) Rural peasants found an escape valve in the towns as individual serfs won emancipation. (3) The cities took an active role in government, and the burghesses represented the urban community in the emerging House of Commons. (4) The townsfolk increasingly sided with the king against their mutual rival—the landed nobles. (5) The urban dwellers were usually the first to encounter foreign influences: the commercial revolution, the Renaissance, and the Reformation first won support in the towns; change came much more slowly in the rural north.

**M**edieval culture reached its finest expression in the High Middle Ages. The renewed interest in learning after the eleventh century contributed directly to the rise of universities. Scholars such as Robert Grosseteste and Roger Bacon expanded the known boundaries of knowledge in mathematics and science and, along with others, sought to reconcile the new learning with their Christian faith.

Perhaps the age's most enduring creation was the Gothic cathedral. It embodied in its stained glass windows, soaring spires, and majestic forms the medieval vision of the universe as an ordered and intelligible whole. The compassionate side of this age of faith was found in the mendicant orders of monks that sought to practice their faith by good works and serving others.

Town life was reborn and burghesses grew wealthy and self-confident in these centuries. They acquired, often by purchase from the king, their own town charters and separate political rights. This had a direct bearing on the evolving government of the realm. No longer would these towns and universities be content to be represented by a political arrangement that was based only on land and feudal allegiance.

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5

**Monarchy and the Rise of Parliament: 1272-1399**

1272	Edward I ascends to the throne of England
1295	Model Parliament of Edward I
1301	Edward I makes his infant son the Prince of Wales and claims direct control over Welsh lords
1305-1378	Papal seat moves from Rome to Avignon
1314	Robert Bruce wins Scottish independence by defeating English at Battle of Bannockburn
1327	Edward III begins his fifty-year reign
1337-1453	The Hundred Years' War between England and France
1348-1349	The Black Death (bubonic plague) sweeps England
1359	Battle of Poitiers in the Hundred Years' War
1381	Peasants' Revolt led by Wat Tyler and Jack Straw
ca. 1387-1400	Chaucer writes <i>Canterbury Tales</i>
1399	Henry Bolingbroke and Parliament force the abdication of Richard II

The fourteenth century was a period of transition for England. It saw the erosion of confidence and the splintering of the Corpus Christianum of the High Middle Ages. A debilitating papal schism and a growing antiericleralism weakened the Church, and the political and military bonds of

feudalism were challenged. The century was profoundly affected by the bubonic plague which reduced England's population by a third between 1348 and 1350.

Fourteenth-century England struggled, in particular, with the problem of finding a satisfactory substitute for political feudalism. Gradually Parliament slipped into the stream of English life as the institution that could best accomplish this change in governance. Not until the seventeenth century would the powers of Parliament again make such gains. In the long run the growing sense of nationality and central government—the king in Parliament—had more lasting effects than the more immediate concerns of the Hundred Years' War in France or civil war at home.

## THE THREE EDWARDS

In the century following the death of Henry III the judicial system of England became more centralized in organization and more specialized in function. Statute law was significantly increased and defined by the king in Parliament; and through conflict and conquest the boundaries of the nation were expanded. Amidst these new developments and crises—nationalism, anticlericalism, the Black Death—the monarchy remained strong and Parliament increasingly became an important ally in governance.

### Edward I, 1272-1307

Edward was the first King since the Anglo-Saxon era to be considered primarily English. His personal qualities, coupled with his reputation as a statesman and military leader, made his reign outstanding. His two great contributions to the modern British state were the development of statute law and the conquest of Wales. Tall (nicknamed "Longshanks") and attractive, King Edward was energetic and resourceful; he had learned from his father's turbulent reign that the king must reign through the law. Because of his respect for law and his legal reforms Edward I has been called the English Justinian.

### Legal Reforms

Edward I confirmed and codified by legislative enactment much of the legal machinery that Henry II had set up. He did this by statute law—legislation passed by the king in Parliament—and thereby introduced into the English legal system a new type of law which took precedence over all other laws. This flurry of legislative activity would not again be matched by Parliament until the era of the Great Reform Bill (1830s). Edward and his justices were influenced by the great medieval jurist Henry de Bracton, who argued that the king must govern by the rules of the law since it was the law that made him king. The King was the fountainhead of all justice. Edward

### Edward and the Church

As baronial jurisdiction declined, royal courts increased and became more specialized in function. Three separate divisions, each stemming from the *curia regis* (the King's Council), were now in operation: the court of the exchequer for tax cases, the court of common pleas for civil cases, and the court of the king's bench for crown pleas or criminal cases. In 1275 for the first time customs duties became part of the regular revenue of the king, and an import duty, called "tunage and poundage," soon brought in more revenue than all the king's hereditary income. However, Edward lost an old source of revenue, but won popular backing, when he expelled all Jews from England in 1290. The new statute law of Edward's was more rigid and timeless than the previous judge-made law and fostered the expansion of the legal profession as judges and lawyers increasingly became specialists.

### THE MACHINERY OF JUSTICE

translated this theory into practice by insisting that private warrants or franchises could be valid only if they could show that they had been granted by royal charter. Among the new laws were the Statute of Gloucester (1278), which required that all holders of private jurisdiction must prove their warrant was of royal origin, and the Statute of Mortmain (1279), which prohibited a vassal from giving land to the Church without his lord's consent. *De Donis Conditionalibus* (from the Statute of Westminster, 1285) and the Statute of *Quia Emptores* (1290) made significant contributions to property law and reflected further the decline of the feudal arrangement and of the private courts.

### Edward and Celtic Britain

Edward I was a devout king who remained on friendly terms with the popes without copying his father's subservience to Rome. Since the Church was the greatest landholder in the realm and as a perpetual organization never relinquished any of its property to the Crown through escheat (the reversion of lands to the original grantor because no heirs were capable of inheriting it according to the terms of the original grant), forfeitures, or wardships, Edward attempted to limit further extension of Church property without royal consent by the Statute of Mortmain. Edward also demanded a heavy income tax from the clergy to pay for some of the costs of the Crusades. In 1296 Pope Boniface VIII in the papal bull *clericis laicos* claimed such taxation could only take place with papal consent. After both King and Pope raised the stakes in the test of authority and allegiance of English churchmen, a compromise was arranged whereby "voluntary" gifts were secured from the Church.

As the first English monarch to envision a union of British peoples, Edward temporarily succeeded in subduing Wales and Scotland, but recurring revolts in these areas so harassed the King that his plans for conquest

in France were frequently curtailed. Edward increased royal power in Ireland, successfully fought the Welsh and absorbed Wales into his kingdom, but he failed to conquer Scotland and, instead, aroused in the Scots a hatred of England that lasted for centuries.

#### WALES

In the thirteenth century the Welsh were still a pastoral people ruled by chieftains who thrived on constant war among the tribes. Following the

Conquest Norman barons had carved out baronies in the border area or marches. Prince Llewelyn led the Welsh in a bid for complete independence from this Norman overlordship but the two Welsh revolts (1277, 1282) ended in their defeat by Edward I. His infant son, Edward, was designated Prince of Wales at Caernarvon Castle, and this title is still conferred upon the eldest son of Great Britain's reigning monarch. Further uprisings only extended a more direct English rule with the imposition of English laws and the shire system. The border or marcher lords remained semi-independent and would not become fully incorporated into the English government until 1536. Under Edward I the Welsh were conquered, but their assimilation took centuries.

#### SCOTLAND

The kingdom of Scotland had resulted from the gradual union of the Picts (the original Celtic inhabitants), the Scots (immigrants from Ireland in the fifth century), the Angles (from the Anglo-Saxon kingdom of Northumbria), and the Britons (the Celts pushed into the western highlands by the Angles). Unification began in the year 843 when Pict-land and Scot-land were merged by Kenneth Mac Alpin, King of Scots. In the centuries between the Norman Conquest and the reign of Edward I, both Anglo-Saxon and Norman influences dominated the Lowlands of Scotland while Celtic and tribal life retreated to the Highlands. Both King Malcolm III (1058-1093) and King David I (1124-1153) identified increasingly with the Norman and feudal institutions to the south.

Such amity disappeared when Edward I sought to take advantage of a disputed succession to press his claim of feudal overlord and to select John Balliol from thirteen rival candidates for the throne. When the Scots rejected his demands and made an alliance with France, Edward invaded Scotland and deposed King John. The Scots responded by rallying around two soon-to-be national heroes. The first was William Wallace, who defeated the English at Stirling Bridge (1297) and invaded northern England. When Edward returned from France he crushed the Scots at Falkirk (1298) and subdued the country a second time. The second hero, Robert Bruce, had himself crowned king at Scone, and again Edward, now over seventy, started north but died on the way to the border. His son, Edward II, a far inferior

#### War with France

#### Edward II, 1307-1327

From the Norman Conquest to the middle of the fifteenth century the kings of England held large possessions in France. As the French kings sought to drive out the English. No English king could allow that without incurring disgrace and humiliation at home. King Philip IV hoped to win back the province of Aquitaine from England and summoned his feudal vassal, Edward, to answer for depredations by his Gascon subjects. Edward defied the order. Consequently Philip declared his vassal, Edward, had forfeited the territory. Edward answered by declaring war in 1294. He collected a large army and made alliances with Philip's enemies, but then revolts in Wales and Scotland delayed him. The expedition ended in a truce and peace was made in 1303 on the basis of the status quo before the war.

At the beginning of Edward I's reign Ireland was much like Wales, a half-conquered country. English control, going back to the twelfth century, was limited to the English Pale, a coastal strip behind Dublin. Here English law and language were found. The western and northern half of the island was almost entirely Celtic. In between was a middle zone where Norman barons from Wales, under the Earl of Pembroke ("Strongbow"), had erected baronies and built castles. Edward tried to extend the Pale and he introduced a Parliament at Dublin on the English model, but he never visited the country and accomplished little. The English extension of their authority in Ireland would wait until the era of the Tudors and Stuarts.

#### IRELAND

military leader, met Bruce of Bannockburn in 1314 and suffered the worst defeat of any English army in all the Middle Ages. The outcome was independence for Scotland. Edward III supported Edward Balliol over David Bruce and at the battle of Halidon Hill (1333) the English revenged their defeat at Bannockburn, but their rule over Scotland remained temporary. By 1341 David Bruce duplicated his father's feat and drove out the English. Scotland remained independent, but the country remained poverty-stricken, its nobles quarrelsome, and its economy primitive.

Once again a strong king was followed by a feeble son as Edward II was demonstrated by increasing dependence on favorites, beginning with the Gascon knight Piers Gaveston. In the Parliaments of 1309-1310 the barons, led by Thomas, earl of Lancaster, attempted to reassess their influence. Gaveston was banished, and a council of twenty-one Lord Ordainers was set up to control the appointments of household offices. In 1312 Edward defied this arrangement and restored Gaveston to royal favor; the barons retaliated by having Gaveston executed. The King's humiliating defeat to

Robert Bruce at Bannockburn forced him to capitulate again to the control of the Earl of Lancaster.

Baronial disunity, heavy taxes, and successful raids by the Scots in the north led to civil war in 1322. The rebellion was defeated, providing a temporary reprieve for Edward and his new favorite, Hugh Despenser. While Edward's wife, Isabella, was negotiating peace with her brother, the King of France, she became enamored with Roger Mortimer of Wales, and the two began to plot against her husband. In 1326 the Queen and Mortimer landed in England and won an easy triumph over Edward. A controlled Parliament in 1327 deposed Edward II in favor of his son, Edward, duke of Aquitaine. Shortly thereafter the deposed King was brutally murdered.

### **Edward III, 1327-1377**

In contrast to Edward II's years, Edward III's reign was marked by peace at home and war abroad. At the beginning of his reign actual power rested with his mother and her lover, Mortimer. Three years later Edward, now eighteen, halted the greedy guardianship by having Parliament condemn Mortimer to death as a traitor and his mother stripped of power. Like Richard I, Edward III was a warrior-king. Chivalrous and charming, he was immensely popular. Learning from the tragedy of his father, he determined to maintain the loyalty of his barons and held their loyalty throughout his reign, as well as that of his six sons, unlike Henry II. Since Edward never threatened the barons' privileges as his grandfather, Edward I, had done, the magnates followed him in his favorite pastime, fighting. His life work was the war in France and he is charged, at times, by contemporaries and historians, with squandering the resources of the Crown and making too many concessions in Parliament to carry out this obsessive goal of victory in France.

## **THE HUNDRED YEARS' WAR**

For over a century (1337-1453) England fought intermittently on French soil as old rivalries were renewed and new claims asserted. The fighting moved from a feudal and dynastic dispute to a national war. Although the English kings failed to conquer France, their preoccupation with the war had important side effects in England, such as the rapid increase in the use of the English language, the growth of Parliament, and rising antipapal feeling.

### **Causes of the War**

Actually a series of wars were fought, not just one war, but the term "Hundred Years' War" continues in use. The underlying cause of the war was the heritage of hostility resulting from English possessions in France.

These were a constant obstacle to the efforts of more powerful French monarchs in the fourteenth century to centralize and consolidate their holdings. Philip IV had attempted to seize Gascony in 1294, and French interference with the English rule of Gascony continued with his successors.

By 1337 Edward III was convinced that only a major war with France could prevent the annexation of Gascony by the French King. The French alliance with Scotland, which increased Edward's difficulties in his war with the Scots, added to the grievances. England's economic interdependence with Flanders was also involved. English wool supplied Flemish looms, and this trade was in jeopardy because of the increasing subser-viency of the Count of Flanders to the King of France. The clash of economic interests resulted in an alliance between Edward III and the Flemish burghers against Philip and the pro-French count. When Edward decided upon war he also resurrected his claim to the French Crown. The powerful Capetian dynasty had died out after Philip the Fair's three sons had died without heirs, leaving the line of succession through Philip's daughter, Isabella, mother of Edward III. The French courts, however, disposed of Edward's claim by invoking an old Salic law forbidding inheritance through the female line and declared instead in favor of the nephew of Philip the Fair, Philip VI of Valois.

### **WAR: ROUND ONE, 1337-1360**

The conflict between England and France is divided into two phases in each of which the English invaded France and won impressive victories after which the French rallied each time to push back the invaders. (The second phase occurs under Henry V and Henry VI in Chapter 6). In 1340 Edward assumed the title of King of France after winning the naval battle of Sluys. In 1346 Edward's major invasion began.

**Battle of Crécy, 1346.** At Crécy Edward III and his eldest son, Edward the Black Prince, met a much larger French army under Philip VI who was confident of victory, but the English annihilated the French cavalry by superior tactics and the innovation of the longbow. The English army then seized the port of Calais after which an eight-year truce halted the war.

**Battle of Poitiers.** In the summer of 1356 the English army penetrated in the heart of France under the leadership of the Black Prince, crushed the French army near Poitiers, and captured King John II and over a thousand knights.

**Treaty of Brétigny, 1360.** When further expeditions failed, Edward III agreed to the terms of the Treaty of Brétigny and renounced his claim to the French throne. He received Gascony, Ponthieu, and Calais and promised the release of King John in return for a ransom of £500,000. The French honored the treaty and English influence expanded in France.



**English Decline.** The ravages of the Black Death, the Black Prince's misrule in Aquitaine, Edward III's senility in his later years, and a new and able French king, Charles V, restored French fortunes in the years following the peace treaty. Before his death Charles won back all but a string of seaports. In 1396 King Richard II married the child-daughter of Charles VI of France and concluded an uneasy peace that lasted for twenty years. With Henry V the second phase of the war would resume.

## THE RISE OF PARLIAMENT

In the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries a national Parliament evolved out of the king's court and gradually divided into two houses, a House of Lords and a House of Commons. With the collapse of feudalism as an effective basis of political life, the monarchs, as well as the barons and commoners, found in the institution of Parliament the instrument to achieve a more mature political community. Parliamentary functions and powers expanded gradually, usually as a response to an immediate need. The reigns of Henry III and the three Edwards are particularly significant in the development of Parliament. The perennial need of the monarchy for money during the Hundred Years' War became the most effective lever by which Parliament wrung concessions from the king.

### Origin

The word "parliament" was a loose term referring to a meeting of the king and certain invited royal officials or influential subjects who gave advice and consent on matters of policy and taxation. Its origin goes back to the Saxon *Witan* and the Norman Great Council, but these appointive councils were limited to the great barons and important churchmen. Under Henry I and Henry II the principle of representation and election was taking shape in the counties through the jury system; whereas King John began the custom of ordering the representative knights to London to meet with him. The kings continued the practice of having knights and burgesses (the commoners) meet with his Parliaments of officials and nobles after the Provisions of Oxford (1258), and Simon de Montfort's Parliament (1265) showed the value of such a representation. Edward I summoned knights and burgesses to thirteen of his thirty-four Parliaments; Edward II, to seventeen of his nineteen Parliaments; and Edward III, to all forty-eight of his Parliaments. Thus an experiment became a regular constitutional custom.

### Composition of Parliament

The most influential members remained the great lords of the realm, who, in deference to their rank, received individual summonses to Parliament from the king. The Model Parliament of 1295 helped establish the

### PARLIAMENTARY FUNCTIONS

Parliament continued to be called into session because it met the needs of the various communities within the realm. It became the institution through which the king could inform his subjects of royal policies and financial needs and ascertain national sentiment through the representatives. Loyal subjects could use Parliament to petition the king or to seek the removal of unpopular royal officials by impeachment. Parliament also served as the highest court of the land. In the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries Parliament met at least annually, at which times members exchanged information, lamented their common grievances, and sought to carry out their mutual interests. Hence Parliament served to unite England into a national community, perhaps more than any other institution.

### EXPANSION OF PARLIAMENTARY POWERS

By the end of the thirteenth century Parliament was an established institution, but its powers and functions were still vague until they were sharpened during the fourteenth century, at the expense of royal prerogative, largely by parliamentary exploitation of the king's need for revenue. As an example, when Edward I was fighting in France and in desperate financial straits, he was forced to agree to the Confirmation of the Charters (1297) which invoked the Magna Charta and permitted no more levying of direct nonfeudal taxes without the consent of Parliament. In 1340 Parliament took advantage of Edward III's need of money to extend its control to indirect taxation as well. The Hundred Years' War accelerated parliamentary influence since the kings were habitually in need of money to conduct their campaigns.

In 1376 Parliament first used the instrument of impeachment against the king's officials, with the House of Commons presenting the indictment and the House of Lords sitting in judgment. From the right to petition the king, Parliament slowly claimed the right to initiate legislation. The king could still veto those statutes or legislate by royal ordinance independently of

King Richard's erratic reign (1377-1399) spanned a variety of political arrangements that included a factious regency during his youth, a baronial oligarchy, a period of royal tyranny, and a forced abdication. In this seesaw struggle between monarchy and oligarchy, the magnates supported the challenger Bolingbroke and brought the Angevin line of kings to an end.

Richard's father, Edward the Black Prince, was Edward III's eldest son and heir to the throne, but he died in 1376, a year before his father, which raised Richard to the throne at the age of ten. The child-king had little chance to mature at court. Dominated and flattered by his ambitious guardians and his beautiful, but flighty, mother, Richard became temperamental with an overwhelming desire to be independent of the magnates who ruled in his name. At the age of fourteen he showed his courage and leadership in handling the Peasants' Revolt, but he soon gave way to the art of dissimbling which became a characteristic of his adult life. The great nobles, led by the King's three uncles, took advantage of Richard's youth to conspire against each other in their scramble for powerful positions.

Emboldened by the shifting equation between king and Parliament since Edward I, the Duke of Gloucester (an uncle of King Richard) used England's deteriorating military position in France and Scotland to oppose his nephew. Gloucester's faction became known as the Lords Appellant because they "appealed" or accused Richard's advisors of treason. Soon all power was in their hands and their "Merciless Parliament" of 1388 banished or condemned to death the King's friends. Five of the Lords Appellant tried to run the government but with no more success than earlier efforts at an oligarchy.

In 1389 Richard II surprised the Lords Appellant by asserting his independence and running his own government. For the next eight years he ruled in a reasonably "constitutional" manner even as he sought to restore the royal prerogative. Then in 1397 Richard radically changed his manner of conduct, exhibited the characteristics of a megalomaniac and made a bid for despotic power. His revenge on the Lords Appellant resulted in the murder of Gloucester, the execution of Arundel, and the banishment of Warwick. He packed Parliament with supporters, passed retroactive anti-

The outstanding constitutional feature of the century was the manner in which the king, lords, and commons "checked and checkmated" each other and gradually compromised themselves into a state of reluctant cooperation. But these years also witnessed a period wasted in foreign wars and glory, the devastating effect of the plague, and growing social and religious upheaval. The woolen industry expanded rapidly, the English language soon outranked Latin and French, and antipapal feeling steadily increased.

## REVOLUTION AND ABDICATION

Richard II proceeded to Ireland to quell a rebellion. In July 1399 Henry Bollingbroke defied his banishment and returned to England; within weeks he had won massive support. Richard was captured upon his return, and a partisan Parliament read thirty-three charges against him and forced his abdication. Henry Bollingbroke claimed the throne by conquest and heredity (see Lancaster and York genealogical table, p. 428). Parliament tried to legalize the forced abdication by statute, but it remained a successful baronial coup and hardly a triumph for constitutionalism, except insofar as it stopped short a move toward royal absolutism. Richard's reign clearly illustrated a basic reason for Parliament's growth: that neither king nor barons were quite strong enough to rule without the other for any length of time. Therefore, each element, to protect its own interests, wanted and needed Parliament and the added strength of the House of Commons.

treason laws, and began to confiscate baronial estates. When his uncle, John of Gaunt, died in 1399, Richard forbade the rightful heir, Henry Bolingbroke, from inheriting the estate. This act frightened all propertied classes and at the same time brought forth a leader to rally the opponents of the King.

separating functions of production. The merchants could give as many small "contracts" to weavers, dyers, or spinners as they were able to market. The textile industry became England's first big business.

**The Black Death, 1348-1349**

The bubonic plague, which had swept across Europe from the East, struck England and wiped out at least one-third of the population. It halted the Hundred Years' War for two years and broke up society by the flight of the privileged from the towns. It was carried by black rats and spread by fleas that they carried, and was followed by a pneumonic plague which spread by direct human contagion. The plague returned, with lesser casualties, five times throughout the century. It reappeared intermittently for three centuries until the brown rat, which was not a carrier of the plague, drove out the black rat, which was. While the plague raged, some citizens resorted to looting and licentiousness; others attempted to do penance to placate an angry God.

The consequences of the plague were momentous: Half the clergy died off; the great loss of population resulted in decreased servants and increased wages; prices rose and rents fell; farm rentals replaced the feudal system of labor services; and sheep farming increased because it required less manpower. The landlords tried to mitigate these changes by having Parliament pass the Statute of Laborers (1351) which froze both wages and prices; however, the act met with little success.

**The Peasants' Revolt, 1381**

The profound frustrations and social changes brought about by the Black Death, the changing economy, and the dissatisfaction with the Statute of Laborers culminated in a peasants' revolt which began in the two southeastern counties of Essex and Kent. The poll taxes of 1377 and 1380 had touched off a deep sense of economic injustice felt by the peasants against the privileged classes. The insurgents, led by Wat Tyler and Jack Straw, marched on London, burning manor records and houses of landlords as they went. In London the government seemed paralyzed while the rioters opened up prisons, burned homes, and murdered the most hated royal officials. At this point the fourteen-year-old Richard II bravely met the rioters and pacified them with promises of manorial reform and the abolition of serfdom. When Tyler was unexpectedly slain, Richard halted the wrath of the rebels by claiming that he would be their leader. The rioters went home and smaller revolts elsewhere were subdued. The revolt failed in its objectives for the King's promises were never kept and exploitation of peasants continued; yet attention was focused on the plight of the peasants for the first time.

**Religious Discontent**

Peasant discontent was also inspired, in part, by the growing criticism of the Church. The spiritual vigor of the Church had declined rapidly in the fourteenth century and the outcries against Church wealth and immorality became more strident. It is perhaps indicative of the decline that not one Englishman was canonized in the fourteenth century. Furthermore, the English Church suffered when the papal seat was moved by the French to Avignon (1305-1378). England, with rising national sentiment and at war with France, resented such papal subservience to their enemy, and Parliament proceeded to penalize the pro-French popes by a series of statutes. The Statute of Provisors (1351) made the acceptance of Church office without royal consent a criminal offense. The Statute of Praemunire, two years later, penalized efforts to circumvent the jurisdiction of the English courts by appealing to the papal court. In 1366 Parliament repudiated the agreement to pay the annual tribute to the Pope that King John had begun.

**WYCLIFFE AND THE LOLLARDS**

John Wycliffe (1328-1384) provided the first frontal attack on the political power and theological underpinnings of the church. An Oxford professor of influence and a forceful writer, he translated the Latin Vulgate Bible into English, preached against ecclesiastical ownership of land, and urged the Church to find its way back to the Bible as the sole source of authority. He also questioned the central doctrine of transubstantiation (the belief that the bread and wine of the Eucharist were transformed into the true presence of Christ). Many of his views coincided with those of his patron, John of Gaunt, so he escaped punishment for his opinions. Wycliffe formed a following of "poor priests" (Lollards) who spread his doctrines after his death. Their anticlerical and evangelical preaching may have encouraged the Peasants' Revolt in 1381; no matter, it made it more easy for the Church to suppress the Lollards as heretics. This time no powerful baron protected the priests and the movement was largely stamped out, but not before Wycliffe's writings had spread to Bohemia where they influenced Jan Hus, a religious reformer whose ideas anticipated those of Martin Luther and the Reformation.

**Language and Literature**

The anti-French and antipapal feeling aroused by Henry III's favorites and the Hundred Years' War hastened the adoption of the English language. Three years after the battle of Crécy grammar school masters began to construe Latin into English instead of French. In 1362 cases in law courts were pleaded in English, and, in the following year, the chancellor opened Parliament with an address in English. Wycliffe wrote his popular works in English and John Gower (1330-1408) wrote his later poems in English.

The most important poets of the Middle English period were William Langland and Geoffrey Chaucer. Langland's poem *Piers Plowman* (1362) was composed as a series of allegories attacking in both satirical and didactical fashion the corrupt society of the day. Chaucer (ca. 1340–1400), often called England's first major poet, blended superb literary technique and masterful storytelling. He provided the best account of contemporary life in his *Canterbury Tales*. The conversation of his pilgrims ranged across the whole spectrum of medieval life, from otherworldliness to the bawdy capers of the knight and the miller. Throughout the tales the sense of religious dissatisfaction and unabashed earthiness foreshadowed the Renaissance and Reformation eras to come.

**A**s the fourteenth century closed, the Catholic universalism of the High Middle Ages was visibly shifting toward modern nationalism marked by the supremacy of English as the language of the realm, a rising anticlericalism, and the growth of capitalism. This transition was at the expense of such medieval customs as feudalism and scholasticism. In other respects many medieval foundations continued to prosper, such as the rule of law by the consent of the communities of the realm (the king in Parliament), the universities, the common law, and the king's council. A century in flux gives us two contradictory images: a glittering time of Crusades and castles and chivalry, and, at the same time, a century of spiritual agony and human despair exemplified by the papal schism, the great plague of 1348–1349, and peasant revolts. With Richard II's forced abdication in 1399 the Plantagenet line of rulers came to an end and the succession became irregular for the first time in two hundred years. For the next century the competition of rival families for the throne would afflict England with civil war and prove the truth of Henry IV's words in *Shakespeare*: "Uneasy lies the head that wears a crown."

### Selected Readings

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## 6

### Lancaster and York

- 1371 Robert II, first king of the House of Stuart, begins his reign in Scotland  
 1399 Henry Bolingbroke (Henry IV) claims the throne of England and to become the first ruler from the House of Lancaster  
 1403 Henry IV defeats the Welsh and Northumberland rebellion at the Battle of Shrewsbury  
 1413 Accession of Henry V to the throne and the renewal of the Hundred Years' War  
 1415 The French army is annihilated by Henry V and the English at the Battle of Agincourt  
 1431 Joan of Arc is burned at the stake for heresy  
 1440 Eton, one of many grammar schools, is founded by Henry VI  
 1455–1485 The Wars of the Roses  
 1461 Edward IV, first of three Yorkist rulers, defeats the Lancastrians at the Battle of Towton to claim the throne  
 1477 First printing press set up in England by William Caxton  
 1485 Henry Tudor, earl of Richmond, defeats King Richard III at Battle of Bosworth Field to end the Yorkist rule

**A**t first glance the fifteenth century appears to be little more than a time of violence, conspiracy, and demoralization of society. Decades of disputed royal succession followed the death of Richard II, the last of the legitimate Plantagenet kings of England.



But the century enveloped more than the breakdown of government. Noteworthy progress in education and literacy took place, foreign trade prospered, and Parliament expanded its functions. In a century of powerful nobles and a government in disarray, Edward IV, a consummate politician-king, reversed the trend toward factionalism and reestablished royal authority. Through this century the military, political, and economic cornerstones of feudalism were visibly disintegrating in practice, if not always in theory. The professional knight, the fief, and the manor, as keystones of medieval life, were less important with each passing generation. In their place appeared a kingdom moving perceptibly toward a nation state, the supremacy of the English language over French and Latin, the rise of commerce, and a money economy.

## THE LANCASTRIAN KINGS

Although the Lancasters claimed the throne by heredity, Henry IV did not have the best claim and was actually King by conquest. This usurpation led to a century of disputed successions during which Parliament became the tool of rival factions. The Lancasters became preoccupied with securing the throne at home and pressing their claim to the throne of France.

Weakened by an uncertain title, Henry Bolingbroke spent most of his reign defending his throne. The difficulties that marked his reign were rarely of his own making for he was astute and experienced in political maneuvering; he realized that his sovereignty depended on the allegiance of his subjects. Henry was able and energetic, and it took all his skill to resist the growing power of the lords and the demand of the House of Commons to control taxation.

**REBELLION**

In 1403 a serious rebellion took shape when Owen Glendower, a Welsh landowner, aroused Welsh nationalism and allied himself with the Percys of Northumberland in an effort to replace Henry with the Earl of March. Henry intercepted the Percys near Shrewsbury, defeated them, and killed Harry Hotspur, the fiery-tempered son of the Earl of Northumberland. King Henry's eldest son, Henry (Shakespeare's "Prince Hal"), halted the Welsh rebellion. In 1408 royal forces defeated the second Percy rebellion, and Northumberland was killed. Finally Henry IV was secure in his kingdom, but exhausted and ill.

Henry IV,  
1399-1413

Henry V,  
1413-1422

**PARLIAMENTARY POWER**

Parliament consistently denied Henry IV adequate revenues in order to keep him dependent on its power to raise taxes. During his reign the House of Commons reached the height of its power in medieval times. The Commons was not so much interested in controlling the government as it was in controlling taxes. To gain additional revenue Henry had to reluctantly agree to such restraints on his authority as Parliament's sole right to initiate money bills, their appointment of treasurers to administer taxes, and their authority to nominate counselors to supervise his administration. Henry resisted these encroachments as best he could. His last years were difficult, as his eldest son, Henry, was impatient to replace his father and fight France. In 1413 Henry died broken in health and spirit.

When Henry V ascended the throne, he directed his military and organizing abilities to the conquest of France in a renewal of the Hundred Years' War. Once more the nation united in a patriotic fervor against their old foe. Henry's victories marked the high tide of English success in France. At home he was not seriously threatened by rebellion as was his father, and he seemed to think the Lollards ("poor priests" who followed John Wycliffe) more dangerous than Wales or Scotland. Lollard executions increased, and their new leader, Sir John Oldcastle, was imprisoned and later burned as a heretic in the fires of Smithfield.

The Hundred  
Years' War;  
Round Two,  
1414-1453

When Henry V came to the throne, conditions in France were again ripe for English intervention. The French King, Charles VI, was insane, and the country was sharply divided between rival factions of Burgundians and Orleanists. In 1415 Henry allied himself with the Burgundians and landed in France with a well-equipped army; his objective was the union of France and England under one crown.

**Battle of Agincourt, 1415.** On the road to Calais Henry and his troops confronted a French army five times its size at a woods near Agincourt. Before nightfall the French forces were routed and slaughtered. The victory brought Henry great prestige and large sums of money from ransoms.

**Treaty of Troyes, 1420.** With their allies, the Burgundians, capturing Paris, Henry was in a position to exact his terms. According to the Treaty of Troyes, Henry was to marry Charles VI's daughter, Katherine, and be recognized as heir to, and regent of, the French throne. With the death of Charles, Henry was to realize his goal and inherit the French throne. This was the high-water mark of English hopes in France. Before the terms of the treaty could take place, Henry contracted dysentery and died at thirty-five, leaving a year-old son, Henry VI, to try and make good his title to France. Charles VI of France died a few months after Henry.



**Henry VI and France.** At first the English under Henry V's able brother, the Duke of Bedford, made easy headway against the young dauphin who assumed the title of Charles VII. By 1429 the English were besieging the weak Charles in his last stronghold, Orléans, and all hope for an independent France appeared doomed. At this juncture a young peasant girl, Joan of Arc, saved France by her vision of divine guidance. Inspired by her leadership the French broke the siege of Orléans and advanced on Paris. Joan was captured by the Burgundians, sold to the English, tried by the French clergy, and burned as a witch. The tide now turned against the English as the Burgundians changed sides, and in quick succession Paris, Rouen and Guienne fell to the French. When this longest of wars finally ended in 1453 only Calais remained in English hands.

**Results of the War.** France won the war even though it lost most of the famous battles. A lasting legacy of antagonism ensued between England and France that lasted until 1914 and World War I. Nevertheless, England's loss freed from involvement in a hopeless Continental enterprise and could turn its attention to problems at home and commercial expansion overseas. During the war years Parliament had exploited the monarchy's constant need for money by bargaining for substantial concessions from the kings. National identities were forged by the war even though the conflict began as a dynastic rivalry. The introduction of longbows revolutionized medieval warfare and hastened the demise of feudalism by mastering the previously invincible mounted knight. Finally, the surge of nationalism resulting from the war introduced a new kind of professional or mercenary army (requiring direct taxation) and made Englishmen eager to limit the influence of a foreign papacy.

## Henry VI at Home

Henry inherited very little of his father's energy or genius but copied instead the traits of madness of his grandfather, Charles VI of France. During his minority his uncles, the able Duke of Bedford and the not-so-able Duke of Gloucester, controlled the government. After Bedford's death, government authority deteriorated rapidly. In 1445 Henry married a fury, Margaret of Anjou, who ruled him and tried to rule the country. Caring only for religion and books, Henry was utterly ineffective as king even though he was also perceived by contemporaries as a pious king-saint.

The humiliation of losing territory in France increased popular dissatisfaction with the king. In 1450 Jack Cade of Kent expressed the restlessness of the gentry and yeomen by leading a three-county rebellion against the government. Cade's followers marched into London with little resistance and demanded better justice, the free election of knights to Parliament, and payment of the king's debts to his creditors. In time Cade was caught and killed, but other uprisings continued. In 1453 when the inept

## Origins of the Wars

Following the end of the Hundred Years' War in France (1453) two rival English Houses with private liveries fought each other for the next thirty years for the throne and for political power. Tradition has labeled this dynastic civil feud the Wars of the Roses, from the white rose emblem of the House of York and the red rose of the House of Lancaster. In fact, the red rose was not a Lancastrian emblem, but was adopted when the wars were over by the next dynasty, the Tudors. These struggles between aristocratic factions decimated the ranks of the nobility but made less impact on the country at large except to add more disruption to a time of trouble and disorder.

## THE WARS OF THE ROSES

Henry VI went completely mad and at the same time became a father, the stage was set for political factionalism to erupt into warfare.

## Course of the Wars

The battles of this dynastic struggle were brutal and were mostly fought on a small scale by groups of noblemen and their bands of private mercenaries. Except for brief intervals the Yorkists controlled the government through the period with Edward IV, Richard's son, reigning as the first of three Yorkist kings.

The basis for the divided allegiance of the nobility was the dynastic struggle between York and Lancaster. Until 1453 Henry VI was childless, and the best claim to succeed him was made by Richard, duke of York, who had a more direct descent from Edward III than the Lancastrian kings. In 1453 the matter of genealogy was complicated by the birth of a son to Henry and Queen Margaret and by the first of his several periods of insanity. With the king incapacitated, the House of Lords appointed York as Lord Protector. The next year the king recovered and the Queen retaliated by ousting York and his friends from office. York resorted to arms and war began.

The battles of this dynastic struggle were brutal and were mostly fought on a small scale by groups of noblemen and their bands of private mercenaries. Except for brief intervals the Yorkists controlled the government through the period with Edward IV, Richard's son, reigning as the first of three Yorkist kings.

**Battle of St. Albans.** The fighting began with a Yorkist victory at St. Albans in 1455. The Duke of Somerset was killed and York became Lord Protector as madness once again disabled King Henry. With his recovery Queen Margaret returned control to the Lancastrians, and in 1459 the leading Yorkists fled into exile.

**Battle of Towton.** In 1460 the Yorkists invaded England from France and Ireland and defeated the royalist forces, but neither the Queen nor the House of Lords would recognize the Duke of York's bid to replace Henry VI as King. Before the end of the year York was killed and Richard Neville, earl of Warwick, was defeated. The Lancastrian interlude was brief as Edward rallied the Yorkists, entered London, and proclaimed himself King. Moving north with his army, Edward IV engaged the Lancastrians at Towton on Palm Sunday, 1461, in what is termed "the bloodiest battle on English soil." Although Henry VI escaped to Scotland, Towton effectively ended sixty-two years of Lancastrian rule.

### Edward IV, 1461-1483

The new Yorkist King spent the first ten years of his reign protecting his throne against the challenges of his friend, Warwick, and his foes, the Lancastrians. Warwick, the "kingmaker," and the Neville family helped put Edward on the throne, but changed sides when Warwick and the King had a fallout over foreign policy and choice of a marriage partner for the King. In 1470 Warwick signed a compact with Queen Margaret and the Lancastrians, marched on London, and released Henry VI from prison. The next year Edward IV returned from Burgundy and crushed the Lancastrian army at the Battle of Barnet, during which Warwick was killed. A month later Edward defeated Queen Margaret's army at Tewkesbury; the Queen was captured and her only son was killed. Henry VI died in the Tower, presumably murdered, and the direct Lancastrian line was wiped out.

Edward governed better than the previous Lancastrians and restored a strong monarchy and confidence in government. He managed this without paying much attention to Parliament since he was never in the financial predicament that permitted Parliament to use its most effective weapon of consent to new taxation. Edward greatly improved the finances of the Crown by abandoning the futile and expensive war in France and by confiscating his enemies' estates and receiving "gifts" from friendly magnates and the merchants of London. Edward also centralized power in the hands of trusted royal officials and counselors. The King was an astute and brilliant soldier and businessman, capable of sound decisions, who paid close attention to the management of finances. It was during his reign that the power of the monarchy began to revive.

### End of the Wars

**Richard III** Edward IV died suddenly in 1483 from overindulgence in food and the feverish pursuit of pleasure. He left two young princes to be protected in their minority by either the Queen Mother, Elizabeth Woodville, or their uncle, Richard of Gloucester. Richard had served his brother well as an administrator and advisor; however his overriding ambition and suspicion of the Queen and her relatives caused him to act rapidly and without scruple to win the Crown for himself. In short order he arrested the supporters of the Queen, intimidated the Great Council into making him Lord Protector, imprisoned the two princes—the uncrowned Edward V and his brother, Richard—in the Tower, and had his enemies executed. On July 6, Richard was crowned King, claiming that Edward's sons were illegitimate. Shortly thereafter the two princes were murdered in the Tower. In the next two years Richard tried to compensate for his violent seizure of the throne by efforts at good government, but his unpopularity increased and he soon resorted to oppressive measures.

### FIFTEENTH-CENTURY ENGLAND

Bosworth Field was the final battle of the Wars of the Roses. The country now yearned for a strong, orderly government that could bring peace. The wars had exhausted the power of the nobility for they had suffered the greatest casualties and many of their leaders were dead. Parliament, too, went into a decline or was used only to sanction the king's actions. At the same time the wars brought the king and the townsmen closer together in common opposition to their mutual opponent, the feudal nobility.

The dynastic and military maneuvers of the fifteenth century overshadow other areas of English life, but in so doing they create a false picture. Political demoralization and preoccupation with war and violence did not necessarily carry over into all other areas of life. Consequently the century is more correctly a transitional era as medieval times dissolved into the age of the Renaissance.

The Economy

The export of raw wool declined during the century, but the manufacture and export of woollen cloth increased dramatically and led to a search for new markets and the subsequent growth of the merchant navy. Trading organizations, such as the Merchant Adventurers, began to flourish, and during the reign of Edward IV royal support was given to commerce. There followed a notable rise in the prosperity of city merchants and country gentry which, in turn, augmented their influence. The country gentry were increasingly becoming a *rentier* class, who, instead of farming their lands, rented them out to an emerging yeoman class of small farmers—a class later known as “the backbone” of England.

In this century the merchants were also escaping from the inhibiting regulations of the medieval guilds as they looked to the king for support in their attempts at national and international trade. It was the large landowners who suffered the sharpest economic decline in this century. The civil wars and economic depression affected their standard of living sharply. The population of England dropped dramatically during the century from 5 million at the end of the thirteenth century to only 2.2 million in 1485 as a result of the Black Death and related diseases.

Education

The fifteenth century saw a significant growth in new colleges and endowments and in the expansion of old schools. About two hundred grammar schools were in existence, including Eton, founded by Henry VI in 1440. Henry also founded King's College, Cambridge, and his wife founded Queens'. Half a dozen other colleges were also established during the century. In London the famous Inns of Court, established in the thirteenth century, became prestigious centers of legal training.

Literature

There was little intellectual vitality in the century compared to earlier and later centuries. The revival of learning came later in England than on the Continent, slowed down, in part, by the confusion and anarchy of the Wars of the Roses. In 1477, under the patronage of Edward IV, William Caxton set up the first printing press in England. In contrast to the new secularism of the Italian Renaissance, Englishmen in the fifteenth century still read works dealing primarily with moral or semireligious themes.

POETRY

No author in the fifteenth century approached Chaucer, although several of his disciples tried to imitate him: John Lydgate (ca. 1420 in *The Story of Thebes* and *The Troy Book*, and Thomas Occleve (ca. 1411) in the *Dialogue* and *De Regimine Principum*.

PROSE

*The Paston Letters*, the correspondence of three generations of the Paston family of Norfolk, provide some of the most illuminating historical and social documents of the years 1422–1509. In 1469 Sir Thomas Malory compiled *Morte d'Arthur* in which he recaptured the legend of Arthur and the knights of the Round Table. Two important writers in law and political philosophy were Sir John Fortescue (ca. 1394–ca. 1476) and Sir Thomas Littleton (c. 1407–1481). In his *De Laudibus Legum Angliae* Fortescue showed a mastery of common law, whereas Littleton is distinguished for classic treatises on estates and real property law found in his *Tenures*.

Courts and Parliaments

The spirit of lawlessness and defiance of authority that was characteristic of the century undermined the process of justice: Royal judges lost their authority as kings lost their power; justices of the peace were bribed or intimidated by local lords and their liveried retainers; jurors were bought; and sheriffs were little more than agents of local magnates. The nobles also tried to use the Lancastrian Parliaments as their instrument, but this did not keep the functions of Parliament from becoming even more firmly established. Parliament was clearly recognized as the highest court of law in the land. The House of Commons was fully accepted as a separate entity, and in 1429 legislation made voting privileges uniform for the first time. The famous “forty-shilling freeholder” franchise was adopted. This meant that the right to elect members of Parliament in the counties was limited to freeholders whose income from property was worth a minimum of forty shillings. The Commons increased its influence over taxation. As the middle class of gentry and merchants grew in influence, so did the House of Commons.

THE KING'S COUNCIL

There were wide variations in the membership and power of the King's Council during the century. Under Henry V it was a small group of close friends; under Henry VI it came under the control of barons chosen by the House of Lords. In the reign of Edward IV the council became largely an administrative body with little influence since real authority resided with the King and certain of his key advisors, such as the Earl of Warwick. With few exceptions, what the century seemed most to lack was “strong central governance”; this was to be provided in full measure by the new Tudor dynasty.

HISTORY OF SCOTLAND, 1066-1485

Not until the eighteenth century with the Act of Union (1707) would Scotland become formally united with England. Until then the very location of Scotland made it an important factor in the reign of each English king, either in his efforts to expand his power and conquer the country or to defend England from Scottish reprisals.

Although the majority of Scots were Celtic in blood and background, the form of government and manner of speech in Scotland came from Saxon and Norman England more than from Ireland and Wales. In the Lowlands (southeast) Norman barons established their feudal arrangements, and Scottish kings copied English laws. In the north, the Highlanders never accepted this modified "English" society but rather maintained tribal law and customs until after their final revolt in 1745.

Scottish Government and Society

Summary of Scottish History, 1066-1272

Malcolm II, who succeeded in uniting Scotland as a kingdom at the beginning of the eleventh century, was followed by Duncan and Macbeth; the latter was overthrown by Malcolm III in 1057. Malcolm later fought with William the Conqueror and was forced to pay him homage. After a period of upheaval David I restored order and lived peacefully with England until 1138 when he was defeated at the Battle of the Standard. English domination peaked in the reign of Henry II when he claimed and received homage from all Scotland. Richard I assisted the return of independence to Scotland by his long absences from England and his annulment of the Treaty of Falaise for a sum of money. The reigns of Alexander II (1214-1249) and his son Alexander III (1249-1286) gave Scotland a lengthy interlude of peace and prosperity.

BALIOU, WALLACE, AND BRUCE

Following the death of Alexander III a disputed succession to the Scottish throne arose. Edward I of England asserted his claim to the overlordship of all Scotland and awarded the crown to John Balliol. John Balliol (1292-1296). King John grew restive under English suzerainty because of Edward's constant demand for men and money for the French wars. In 1295 John made an alliance with France, which began three centuries of Franco-Scottish friendship, and renounced his homage to Edward. Edward decisively defeated the Scots at Dunbar (1296), deposed King John, and ruled Scotland through English commissioners. William Wallace (1297-1305). After leading a guerrilla campaign, Wallace collected an army and defeated the English at Stirling Bridge in 1297. In the following year the Scots under his command surrendered to King Edward after the Battle of Falkirk. In 1305 Wallace was captured by the English and hanged as a traitor.

Robert Bruce (1306-1329). A grandson of the claimant against Balliol, Bruce in 1306 had himself crowned king at Scone, built up an army, and prepared to meet Edward I; however, the English king died en route to give battle. By 1314 Bruce had taken all English garrisons in Scotland except Stirling. Edward II finally brought his army north and met Bruce at Bannockburn in 1314. The battle became a glorious Scottish victory and made independence possible. The Treaty of Northampton (1328) confirmed both Bruce's kingship and Scotland's freedom from English overlordship.

Summary of Scottish History, 1329-1371

The House of Stuart

In the fourteenth century the contest for the throne of Scotland was between Edward Balliol, son of John Balliol, and David II, son of Robert Bruce. After an unsuccessful attempt to usurp the crown from King David, Balliol was ousted and fled to England for sanctuary. In 1333 Edward III of England defeated the Scots at Halidon Hill and placed Balliol on the throne. David escaped to France. Balliol was repudiated by the Scots for his homage to King Edward, and intermittent war between England and Scotland took place for the next two decades, with France aiding Scotland. In 1346 David invaded England but was captured at Neville's Cross and remained a captive in London. By the Treaty of Berwick (1357) David Bruce was ransomed for 100,000 marks. He reigned until 1371.

Toward the end of the fourteenth century and afterward there was a struggle between the Stuarts and their rivals for power. The intrigues and battles that took place resembled those fought south of the border in the Wars of the Roses.

Robert II (1371-1390). King Robert, the first of the Stuarts, began his reign by signing a truce with England's John of Gaunt. Then in 1385 Scotland allied itself with France and Richard II invaded Scotland. Three years later the Scots retaliated by invading England and defeating the Percys at the Battle of Otterburn.

Robert III (1390-1406). Because of his physical disability Robert III was a weak ruler; the real power was administered by the King's brother, the Duke of Albany. The King gave the guardianship of his elder son, David, duke of Rothesay, to Albany, who starved him to death at Falkland. When King Robert died, Albany became a regent of considerable ability.

James I (1406-1437). For nearly a decade King Robert's youngest son, James, was held a prisoner by Henry IV. Returning from England in 1424, James promptly introduced English statute law and reformed the judiciary. He also kept the barons in check until he was murdered by Sir Robert Graham in 1437.

James II (1437-1460). James was only seven when he inherited the throne, so that during his minority Scotland was governed until 1449 by a series of regents. A new civil war between the Stuarts and the Douglases



ended in victory for James. Under his rule Scotland again saw security and prosperity, as well as some important reforms in land tenure and in the administration of justice. In 1460 James was killed by the accidental explosion of a cannon during the siege of Roxburgh Castle.

James III (1460-1488). In 1474 an Anglo-Scottish treaty was concluded that brought peace, after Edward IV had found that his support of the Douglases against the Stuarts was futile. King James patronized the arts, extended his rule over the islands surrounding Scotland, and lived in a luxurious manner. He concluded another truce with Richard III that confirmed his supremacy in Scotland; however, his own nobles rebelled against his increasing powers and murdered him in 1488. His son, James IV, would deal with the first two Tudor kings of England.

The transition from the Yorkist to Tudor age at first augured little change from the factional feudalism of the preceding decades. Indeed, the first ten years of the new Tudor rule will seem to bear out the observation that this was only another chapter in the deadly political game of claiming the throne and fending off challengers.

Significant changes were about to occur, however. The new nationalism set the stage for religious nationalism as well and a willingness to repudiate foreign religious authority (the papacy). The country yearned for peace and order after a century of wars and disorder. A powerful intellectual and literary renaissance was beginning.

Certainly the new dynasty did not seek to establish a new order. Rather, Henry Tudor would draw on the tradition of Edward IV and the earlier Edwards to reconstruct a governance model and assert the influence of a strong, secure central government, but one that still ruled most of the time with the consent of Parliament.

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7

The Early Tudors and the Reformation: 1485-1558

- 1485 Henry Tudor claims the throne of England by conquest and heredity
- 1486 Marriage of Henry VII to Elizabeth of York unites the houses of Lancaster and York
- 1509 Henry VIII accedes to his father's throne at age seventeen
- 1516 Publication of *Utopia* by Sir Thomas More, chancellor to Henry VIII
- 1529-1536 The Reformation Parliament passes the statutes dissolving the monasteries and separating the English Church from Rome
- 1534 Act of Supremacy acknowledges the king as the supreme head of the English Church
- 1536 Anne Boleyn, Henry VIII's second wife, is charged with adultery and executed
- 1547 Edward VI, Henry's son, accedes to the throne at age ten
- 1549 Archbishop Cranmer writes and issues the first Book of Common Prayer
- 1553 Forty-Two Articles of Faith define the faith of the Church of England in stronger Protestant terms
- 1554 Mary Tudor marries Philip of Spain, son of Emperor Charles V, and restores papal supremacy in England



**H**enry VII and Henry VIII, each in his own way, reconstructed and strengthened the monarchy as an institution and as the symbol of England's growing national self-consciousness. The strong royal government they provided gave England the peace, security, and self-confidence that it so obviously lacked through much of the fifteenth century.

At the same time the ferment of rising nationalism encouraged a religious and intellectual reawakening that produced a religious revolt and later a literary renaissance. The religious issue dominated the reigns of Henry VIII, Edward VI, and Mary. This period also shows that economic, social, and intellectual forces do not alone shape history. Individual whims and actions also shape society. Henry VIII's insistence on a divorce helped make England a Protestant nation while Thomas Cromwell's calculated use of Parliament as the instrument to break away from the papacy made future royal dependence on Parliament even more certain.

## HENRY VII

Henry Tudor faced the enormous problem of restoring royal authority and order in the country, a task made even more difficult by the fact that he, himself, had a very tenuous claim to the throne. In spite of these obstacles, King Henry was highly successful in both his domestic and foreign policies and left his son the richest treasury in Europe. In his quiet way Henry may well have done more to unite Great Britain than any monarch since the first Edward.

### Consolidation of Power

With only a remote Lancastrian claim to the throne that he traced through his mother back to John of Gaunt (the younger son of Edward III), Henry VII seemed at first to be only one more temporarily successful dynastic ruler. He immediately moved to strengthen his position by having Parliament confirm his title on the grounds of heredity, even though he was actually king by conquest. Henry then married Edward IV's oldest surviving daughter, Elizabeth of York, thereby joining the two rival houses of York and Lancaster. His next move was to curb the power of the nobles.

### LIVERY AND MAINTENANCE

Henry's first Parliament revived an earlier statute against livery and maintenance (the right of nobles to retain a private, uniformed retinue of soldiers). The legislation helped reduce the individual power base of leading magnates and possible challengers to his sovereignty.

### Character of the king

**RIVAL CLAIMANTS**

Domestic and foreign enemies of the King exploited Henry's flimsy title to the Crown by supporting various pretenders to the throne. Lambert Simnel impersonated the Earl of Warwick and won the backing of Yorkist sympathizers and of Margaret, duchess of Burgundy. In 1487 he landed in England with an army of Irishmen and German mercenaries. After the invaders were defeated, Simnel was put to work as a dishwasher in the royal kitchen. Perkin Warbeck, a Flemish apprentice, claimed that he was Richard, duke of York, the younger son of Edward IV who had been slain in the Tower. By 1493 he had won the support of the Kings of Scotland, France, and Germany. His attempted invasion of England in 1495 failed. Two years later a joint invasion by King James IV of Scotland and Warbeck also failed. Warbeck was captured and executed two years later. In each rebellion King Henry remained calm, acting wisely and usually with forbearance to keep his throne by sheer ability rather than by ruthlessness or by general popularity. Although other rebellions followed, Henry had secured his dynasty and was never seriously threatened after 1497.

**COURT OF STAR CHAMBER**

To enforce the judicial authority of the central government, Henry's Star Chamber Act (1487) revived the jurisdiction of his Council over all cases of livery and maintenance, bribery, and civil disorder. The Court of Star Chamber (so named because of the starred ceiling of the room where it met) was under Henry's direct influence. The court's officers of state and two chief justices operated without juries and developed swift and effective procedures to enforce the common law. Its vigorous prosecution of lawbreakers gradually compelled the nobles to accept royal authority since they could not intimidate or bribe this court as they could a local jury. In Tudor times the court was popular with the people for it could act impartially and bring to justice those overlords who disregarded the rights of Englishmen in their local district. The unpopularity of the Court of Star Chamber stems from the seventeenth century when its original purposes no longer applied and when the Stuarts used it to oppose Parliament.

Henry VII, unlike his son, never caught the popular imagination. Perhaps his reign appeared dull because his policies were so eminently shrewd and logical that they produced respect, but hardly enthusiasms. Aloof and colorless, he engendered respect, if not love, in his subjects. By sheer skill and the wisdom to work for limited, rather than grandiose, objectives, he set the monarchy above political faction. The image of King Henry "the miser" is overdrawn; he was personally frugal and meticulous in keeping financial accounts. He was, indeed, industrious and had an infinite capacity for detail. No doubt he was the best businessman to serve as king of England. But he

was frugal and fiscally prudent because he realized that money meant power and freedom from royal concessions to gain parliamentary grants.

Henry VII was a prudent, businesslike king who was convinced that external peace and internal order were dependent upon a prosperous and secure country. His financial policies reflected this conviction. His success in these policies won him the goodwill of his subjects.

### TAXATION

A fundamental weakness of the feudal monarch was his reliance upon vassals for revenue. Beyond these resources the king could only appeal to Parliament. Henry did not want to antagonize his subjects by raising taxes or concede royal prerogatives to win parliamentary support for tax increases; only five times during his reign did he ask Parliament for any direct taxation.

To become self-sufficient Henry pared expenditures, personally checked the account books, encouraged foreign commerce in order to increase custom duties, resumed every dormant right of the Crown he could find, levied steep fines in court, and seized the property of outlawed nobles who were convicted in court. Occasionally he resorted to benevolence or extortion from his richer subjects. In this manner he filled the royal coffers and bequeathed to his son a substantial surplus in the royal treasury.

### COMMERCE

By means of treaties and monopolies Henry VII increased the volume of trade and encouraged English shipping. The Navigation Act of 1485 stimulated English shipping, while the *Intercursus Magnus* treaty (1497) with the Netherlands provided for reciprocity of trade. In 1506 a monopoly of the English cloth trade in the Low Countries was given to the Merchant Adventurers. A heavy duty was placed on exported wool to encourage the woolen industry to expand its export of manufactured woollens.

### DECLINE OF THE GUILDS

The craft guilds were already in decline at the beginning of Henry VII's reign. Wealthy masters were becoming so exclusive that journeymen were leaving the towns to avoid the strict regulations of the guilds. Nor did local guilds promote the national interest; rather, they were concerned with a monopoly over local crafts, often at the expense of economic expansion. Henry accelerated the decline of the guilds by an act in 1504 which forbade any subsequent ordinances of guilds from being binding until approved by certain government officials. Already the craft guilds were being superseded by the domestic system, under which capitalistic merchants became middlemen between the producer and the consumer and supplied the worker in his home with raw materials and bought his finished product. This domestic system developed first in the woolen industry.

### Foreign Policy

King Henry's foreign policy centered around the goals of peace and security. He did not want unnecessary wars that could only drain the treasury and jeopardize his throne by possible defeat. He clearly preferred political marriages to military engagements.

### MARRIAGE ALLIANCES

Henry VII arranged the marriage of his eldest son, Arthur, to Catherine, daughter of Ferdinand and Isabella of Spain. Such an alliance was a political coup, but within six months Arthur was dead and Catherine a widow. Henry arranged for his thirteen-year-old second son, Henry, to be betrothed to Catherine to save the dowry and the alliance with Spain. This marriage, in 1509, was to alter the course of English history. In 1503 he married his daughter Margaret to King James IV of Scotland, thereby preparing the way for the later union of the two kingdoms. His youngest daughter, Mary, was betrothed to Charles of Castile, the grandson of Emperor Maximilian, in return for a large loan and an alliance with Austria.

### CONTINENTAL POLICY

Henry VII had little interest in asserting the old Norman-Angevin claims to French holdings or in wasting his resources in one more attempt to recover them. The English people, however, still considered France their mortal enemy, and Spain made English aid against France a term of the marriage treaty of Arthur with Catherine. Maximilian of Austria also allied with Henry VII against France only to desert him in 1491, as did Ferdinand of Spain. Henry salvaged the situation by appealing to Parliament for money and landing in Calais with a large army. Charles VIII of France was preoccupied with expansion into Italy and, therefore, quickly came to terms with Henry to avoid fighting the English as well. The Treaty of Etaples (1492) would

### PARLIAMENT AND COUNCIL

Henry VII governed largely through the King's Council which included fewer of the great lords than previously and more members of lower social ranks who were selected for their abilities and loyalty. At the county level Henry upgraded the work and influence of the justices of the peace and won the allegiance of the lesser gentry who held these unpaid posts. The justices of the peace supervised the collection of taxes and were the local agents for carrying out the wishes of the central government. Since the English Crown possessed no standing army, royal decrees were effective only to the extent that local agents were able, and willing, to carry them out. During Henry's reign Parliament rarely met since Henry so seldom needed its grants as a regular source of revenue. When it did meet it was usually a willing ally of the Crown, with the Commons effectively managed by Speakers of the House who were royal officials.

provide large annual subsidies to Henry, who preferred tribute to territory in Brittany. Henry VII ended up with successful Spanish and Hapsburg alliances and avoided the temptation that befell the other European powers of becoming embroiled in an Italian empire.

SCOTTISH POLICY

Not until James IV invaded England in support of the pretender, Warbeck, did Henry VII worry about his northern neighbor. He then responded by threatening Scotland with invasion and giving his support to a rival claimant to the Scottish throne; but Henry, as usual, preferred diplomacy to warfare. The Anglo-Scottish treaty of 1499 promised peace between the two countries and sealed the agreement with a marriage alliance between James IV and Henry's daughter Margaret.

IRISH POLICY

Because the Yorkist Irish had actively supported both pretenders to the English throne, Henry sent Sir Edward Poyning to Ireland in 1494 to act as Lord Deputy and to reassert English authority over the island. Poyning's failed to control Ulster, but in the Pale (the area around Dublin) he had laws passed which made the Irish Parliament clearly subordinate to the English Crown. Henceforth, no Irish laws could operate without the approval of the Crown, whereas all English laws automatically applied to Ireland. Poyning's Laws were later damned by the Irish, but Henry avoided immediate trouble by restoring the Earl of Kildare, who was acceptable to the Irish, as Lord Deputy.

English Society

The enclosure movement—fencing off former common lands—increased substantially under the Tudors because landlords saw how much more profitable their common lands could be for sheep-raising. The victims were the peasants who frequently became unemployed vagrants when they were excluded from their share of the meadows and woods. These economic changes reflected the transformation of English social classes as the gentry, yeomen, and merchants grew influential at the expense of the old nobility and the peasants. The great baronial families, such as the Percys and the Nevilles, who had been decimated by the Wars of the Roses, were gradually being replaced in English political and social life by the rising country gentlemen or squires. This new landed aristocracy, based more on wealth or service to the king than on birth, built attractive country houses and became the nucleus of the leisure and governing classes in the counties. These amateur administrators took their work seriously and provided the Tudors with local influence that no central bureaucracy of royal officials could have matched.

The Literary Renaissance

Not until the latter part of the fifteenth century did the Renaissance reach England and quicken the torpid intellectual atmosphere of the universities. English scholars who had studied in Italy introduced the curricula of the humanities in English schools. The first generation of these scholars, which included Thomas Linacre (ca. 1460–1524) and William Grocyn (ca. 1446–1519), made Oxford the center of this literary and educational revival.

THE OXFORD HUMANISTS

The Christian humanists restored intellectual vigor to the Roman Catholic Church by their zealous efforts at ecclesiastical reform through education and classical scholarship. At times they reflected English sentiment by being anticlerical, but they were by no means antireligious. John Colet (1467–1519) was a humanist scholar vitally interested in Church and educational reform. His discourses on St. Paul's Epistles freed his theological thinking from medieval scholasticism. He became dean of St. Paul's Cathedral and founded St. Paul's School. Thomas More (1478–1535) was a noted administrator who became chancellor under Henry VIII. His *Utopia*, which provided a humanistic parody of the times, idealized human nature in its description of a new society free from feudal conceptions and religious intolerance. Desiderius Erasmus (ca. 1466–1536), a Dutch scholar and colleague at Oxford of More and Colet, was the most celebrated Christian humanist of the early Renaissance. His devastating satire and ridicule of many Church practices opened the door for theological criticism of Church doctrines.

HENRY VIII

Henry VII bequeathed to his son a secure monarchy, a full treasury, and a nation with increased stature in the diplomacy of Europe. Upon this foundation Henry VIII's reign (1509–1547) added popular enthusiasm for the Crown and spectacular royal authority, especially observed in his break with Rome and in the confiscation of monastic properties. In this instance Henry carried the country through revolutionary change and practiced royal despotism successfully because he continued to respect traditional forms of English government and because his policies usually reflected the feelings of most of his subjects.

Character of the King

King Henry came to the throne at the age of seventeen, well educated, intelligent, and with a captivating personality. He was a good athlete, knowledgeable in theology, music, and literature, and a born leader. Henry was also exceedingly vain and ambitious, and his appetites knew no modera-

tion. Ruthless and frivolous on occasion and lacking the restraint of his father, King Henry gained the affection of his subjects in a way Henry VII never could. He won immediate goodwill by executing Richard Empson and Edmund Dudley, the two ministers who were loyal to his father but responsible for his legal extortions. The axiom that "strong people have strong weaknesses" characterized Henry. Supremely selfish and egotistical, he dismantled the English Church because it would not grant him a divorce; he married six women and beheaded two of them; he longed for a son and neglected his two daughters; he added glamour and gaiety to the court, but finally grew fat, disease-ridden, and dissolute. Few English kings were as colorful or as controversial.

### Cardinal Wolsey

At first Henry VIII left most administrative details, which he did not enjoy like his father did, to the experienced ministers who had served his father, but shortly he delegated almost complete authority to Thomas Wolsey. Wolsey was a self-made man who collected a string of offices in both Church and government, including those of Archbishop of York (1514), Cardinal and Lord Chancellor (1515), and Papal Legate (1518). He became Henry's closest advisor, and for fifteen years he managed England, especially in the area of foreign diplomacy. He held his power by hard work and competency and realized that his position rested on royal favor and diplomatic success; therefore, he could afford to be greedy, ruthless, and intolerably arrogant to all but the King.

### Foreign Policy

Wolsey organized and directed all but one of Henry VIII's wars. His special forte was diplomacy, in which he operated on the balance of power principle—joining with lesser powers against the most powerful. Wolsey's involvement in foreign affairs won England a conspicuous place in the councils of Europe, but only provoked reaction against him at home.

### ITALIAN-SPANISH POLITICS

Italy had become the battleground of Europe ever since the French in 1494 had shown how easy it was to plunder the peninsula. The papacy organized alliances to prevent one-power domination of Italy. England joined the Pope's Holy League in 1511 to drive the French out of Italy.

### THE SPANISH ALLIANCE

Henry VIII reaffirmed his father's alliance with Spain by marrying his widowed sister-in-law, Catherine, within a month of his accession to the throne. Her father, King Ferdinand, persuaded Henry to join the Pope's Holy League. In 1512 an English expedition planned by Ferdinand against the French failed miserably. Henry redeemed himself by landing in France, defeating the French at the Battle of the Spurs, and capturing Terouenne and Tournai. Ferdinand deserted Henry and made a truce with Louis XII instead.

### ENGLAND AND THE FRANCO-SPANISH RIVALRY

This time the English were not left in the lurch by the Spanish monarch's actions. Wolsey arranged a peace with France that gave England a sum of money and fortified the alliance by the marriage of Henry's sister, Mary, to King Louis XII. Wolsey thereupon tried to build up a coalition against the ambitious new king, Francis I, but did not succeed. In 1518 a treaty of peace was arranged whereby England returned Tournai to France for a handsome profit.

The major dynastic struggle in Europe after 1519 was between Francis I of France and Charles V, King of Spain and Holy Roman Emperor. In this rivalry England lined up with Spain even though Henry and Francis I put on a glittering public display of friendship at the Field of the Cloth of Gold (1520). The following year an alliance with Spain committed England to another war against France, but the English campaigns in France were futile and costly. Wolsey alienated Parliament and the citizens of London by his demands for money to pay for the war and his levy of a 20 percent property tax.

### PRO-FRENCH POLICY

Charles V decisively defeated the French at Pavia (1525), sacked Rome and made the Pope his prisoner. This completely upset the balance of power and forced Wolsey to change sides suddenly and seek a peace with France. In 1526 and again in 1528 England allied with France to check the Emperor; but this time Wolsey's strategy was no longer effective. The pro-French policy did not sit well with England since the old enmity toward France continued strong; furthermore, the policy was disrupting the cloth-export trade to the Netherlands. More significant was Wolsey's loss of influence with the King; he had failed in his bid to become pope, and Henry was demanding action on his divorce proceedings. In 1529 Francis I and Charles V signed the Treaty of Cambrai without even consulting Wolsey.

### SCOTTISH POLICY

In 1513 the Scots, under James IV, took advantage of Henry's absence in France and invaded England. However, they were defeated at Flodden Field and King James was killed in battle. His son, James V, was strongly pro-French. Intermittent border skirmishes by both sides continued until the Scots suffered a disgraceful defeat at Solway Moss (1542). The news of the disaster killed James V, and the throne was left to his week-old daughter, Mary Stuart. Henry tried to negotiate a betrothal between Mary and his son, Edward, but the Scots turned instead to their old ally, France, and later betrothed Mary to the heir to the French throne.



WALES

In the principality of Wales Henry was quietly successful. For the first time in its history Wales was fully incorporated with England by the Act of Union (1536) which provided for twelve counties and twenty-four representatives to Parliament. A second act in 1543 meshed the legal and administrative procedures of the two regions.

IRELAND

The great Anglo-Irish lords, led by the Earls of Ormonde and Kildare, were the real powers in the country. The Earl of Kildare revolted in 1533 in protest over the death of his father in the Tower of London and Henry's antipapal policy. However, this revolt was brutally suppressed, and in 1541 Henry assumed the titles of King of Ireland and Head of the Irish Church. Ireland was temporarily subdued, but the settlement was completely unacceptable to the Irish.

The Fall of Wolsey

Cardinal Wolsey had appropriated royal privileges and virtually ruled the country with an autocratic hand without paying much attention to Wolsey's lavish style of living and insufferable arrogance created personal enemies envious of his position and power. Even though his preoccupation with foreign affairs damaged his reputation in England, he was not threatened as long as he retained the support of King Henry. But royal favor was lost when he was unable to win from the Pope an annulment of Henry's marriage. Wolsey was stripped of his offices and arrested in 1529 for high treason. He died en route to London, and Thomas More took his place as Chancellor.

**KING AND CHURCH:  
THE BREACH WITH ROME**

On the Continent, the Protestant revolt was primarily for religious motives; in England the revolt against the papacy was essentially dynastic and personal, with religious overtones. There was little major change of doctrine under Henry VIII, but rather an exertion of his authority over the Church in the same manner that he eventually ran the state to keep it in order and to get his way.

**Background**

**Events**

(1) The influence of the German and Swiss religious reformers Martin Luther and Ulrich Zwingli had already made some impression on England, and one of their converts, William Tyndale, translated the New Testament into English. However, Henry VIII had no theological argument with the Church; he wrote a tract against Luther in 1521 and for his efforts received from Pope Leo X the title of Defender of the Faith—a title still used by the English monarch today.

(2) Religious reformers in England from the days of John Wycliffe had urged the Church to reform and to curtail its lavish wealth, but for the most part the Church had not changed since the thirteenth century.

(3) Rising nationalism in England made Englishmen increasingly hostile to any foreign allegiance. The king and Parliament both fed on these strong feelings of anticlericalism to restrict papal powers in England.

(4) Deteriorating relations with Spain increased the strain between Henry and his Spanish Queen who could not bear him a son.

(5) The Tudors were dogmatic and determined and were unwilling to be crossed in their plans. The conflict with Rome came to a head with Henry's efforts to win an annulment of his marriage.

**Divorce Proceedings**

By 1527 King Henry had been married to Catherine of Aragon for eighteen years and only one daughter, Mary, had survived infancy. The fear that the new Tudor dynasty would die out because of the lack of a male heir haunted the proud Henry. Since he had obtained a papal dispensation in 1509 to bypass canon law forbidding marriage to a sister-in-law, he now began to claim that his conscience was troubled by the irregularity of the marriage. His desire to divorce Catherine was heightened by his great passion for the Queen's lady-in-waiting, Anne Boleyn, who would consent to be his wife, but not his mistress.

APPEAL TO ROME

In 1527 Henry commissioned Wolsey to secure from the Pope an annulment of his marriage. However, the Pope was virtually a prisoner of Charles V; furthermore, Charles was the nephew of Catherine and certainly would not support such a slight to his aunt. Wolsey worked vigorously for Henry's cause, but the Pope used stalling tactics for two years. When no decision had been reached, Henry lost patience with both the Pope and with Wolsey; he dismissed Wolsey and took matters into his own hands.

HENRY'S MANUEVERS, 1529-1534

When Henry finally broke with Rome, he carried the nation with him. The King severed relations step by step in the hope that constant pressure, short of revolt, on the papacy would give him his own way. Relying on Thomas Crammer and Thomas Cromwell (later to be Chancellor), he made



his divorce case a subject for debate in European universities in 1529; in 1530 he pressured the English clergy into recognizing him as the supreme head of the Church of England "as far as the law of Christ allows." In 1529 Henry had called Parliament into session and for seven years it served as his instrument of antipapal defiance. By 1533 the Pope had made no concessions, and Anne Boleyn was pregnant. Crammer, his ally, was appointed the new Archbishop of Canterbury, and the English ecclesiastical court gave Henry his long-sought annulment. Henry married Anne publicly, and in September she gave birth to a daughter, Elizabeth. The King's hope for a male heir remained unfulfilled.

**Act of Supremacy.** In 1534 the break with Rome was complete when Parliament by statute declared Henry the supreme head of the Church of England; no change of creed took place.

**The  
Reformation,  
Parliament,  
1529-1536**

Thomas Cromwell's most masterful work was his use of Parliament (whereas Wolsey had mistrusted it) to carry out royal policy. The Reformation Parliament, managed by the King's officials but hardly coerced, passed 137 statutes, thirty-two of them relating to the Church. These included the Act of Annates which halted the payment to Rome of the first year's income from new occupants of Church benefices, the Act of Appeals which forbade all appeals to Rome, and a Dispensations Act which cut off all payments to Rome, including Peter's Pence (a tax of one penny per household paid to the Papal See). Then in 1534 the Supremacy Act and a new Treason Act made official the independence of the English Church and prohibited any other religious allegiance among Englishmen. An Oath of Supremacy was required and executions followed for those who publicly refused, including Henry's Chancellor, Thomas More, and John Fisher, Bishop of Rochester. In the Act of Succession (1534) Parliament secured the Crown for Elizabeth and declared Mary illegitimate. This was altered in the act of 1543 to provide for the succession of Prince Edward, Princess Mary, and Princess Elizabeth, in that order.

**The  
Dissolution of  
the  
Monasteries**

Henry's Parliament gave him statutes but little money; therefore Cromwell, the Vicar-General of the Church, seeing an opportunity for his King to not only rule the Church but to own much of it, sent out commissioners in 1535 to build up a case against the monasteries. Their report emphasized the superstitious practices, excessive wealth (ownership of one-fifth of the land of England), and immoral practices within religious communities. In 1536 Parliament abolished 376 religious houses with an annual income of less than £200 each; during the next four years the larger ones were also confiscated on various pretexts, and the confiscation was ratified by statute in 1539. These acts were revolutionary in character as they were neither emergency war measures nor directed against non-English houses; rather

they were large-scale encroachments on private property by the authority of the King in Parliament, and with no justification in common law.

**POLITICAL CONSEQUENCES**

Immediately the removal of the abbots cut in half the number of ecclesiastical lords and changed the complexion of the House of Lords from a predominantly clerical to a predominantly lay group. The combination of conservative Catholic resentment along with the spreading enclosures and increasing taxes resulted in the only serious revolt of Henry's reign, the Pilgrimage of Grace. This revolt rallied those in northern England and opposed to, or frustrated by, change. The rebellion, which was firmly squelched by Henry, resulted in the establishment of the Council of the North, as a branch of the Privy Council, to administer the unruly region directly.

**SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC CONSEQUENCES**

King Henry became very rich temporarily with the income from confiscated monastic lands, although most of this money was squandered in a costly war with France which Henry waged at the end of his reign. More important was the sale of two-thirds of the land to his friends, laying the foundation for the rise of new, influential families and giving them an economic stake in the break from Rome. Many of today's family fortunes and estates date from this period. The poor gained nothing; they lost the social services that were offered by religious houses, whereas the new landlords, more interested in profit, accelerated the enclosure of land which, in turn, produced unsettling social consequences for displaced peasants. With the dissolution of the monasteries an important model of religious life ceased to exist. Monks and nuns became virtually unknown in England for several centuries. With the dissolution came significant destruction of Church property and the loss of books and medieval art as the monastic libraries were scattered.

**Character of  
the Church**

King Henry's quarrel was with the Pope, not with Catholic doctrine. He demanded religious conformity from his subjects in the same way that he expected political allegiance. Both Roman Catholics and Anabaptists (members of a sect that rejected such Church rituals as infant baptism) were burned at the stake for daring to dissent; but they were a small company. Most of the English clergy and laity accepted their king's version of the Church.

**CHURCH PRACTICES**

English replaced Latin in the church services; in 1535 Coverdale's English translation of the Bible was adopted and placed in the churches for all to read. Relics and shrines were discredited and occasionally destroyed.

CHURCH DOCTRINE

The Ten Articles of 1536 passed by Church Convocation reflected some cautious protestantization in declaring the Bible and the creeds the sole authority in matters of faith. However, the King was not in favor of changing the creed, and the Six Articles of 1539 reverted to full Catholic doctrine by upholding oral confession, transubstantiation (the doctrine that the bread and wine of the Eucharist are transformed into the true presence of Christ), clerical celibacy, and prayers for the dead.

Last Years of Henry

After Henry had Thomas Cromwell executed because of his poor choice in selecting him a new wife, he ceased to employ a chief minister. He relied instead on a Privy Council—an “inner circle” of the Great Council—which included the Duke of Norfolk; Edward Seymour, earl of Hertford; Archbishop Crammer; and Stephen Gardiner, bishop of Winchester. Henry’s last years were marked with a series of marriages, an inflationary economy, an expensive war with France, and a bloated and sickly body; the charm and glamour of the young king had given way to cynicism and bad temper in old age. Throughout these years Henry’s authority over the Church and the state was supreme, as he made law by proclamation (Statute of Proclamations, 1539) and broadened the scope of treason.

HENRY’S SIX WIVES

King Henry tired of his second wife after the birth of a daughter instead of a son, and in 1536 Anne Boleyn was indicted on a charge of adultery and executed. Within a month Henry married Jane Seymour who, after giving birth to a son, Edward, died the following year. Chancellor Cromwell next persuaded Henry to contract a marriage, sight unseen, with a Lutheran princess, Anne of Cleves, in order to strengthen the Protestant alliance on the Continent. When she arrived, Henry was appalled at the sight of the “Flanders mare” and vented his wrath on the Chancellor. Cromwell, who had been the architect of Henry’s policy of state supremacy in ecclesiastical matters, was executed and Anne divorced. Henry’s fifth wife was nineteen-year-old Catherine Howard, who lost her head upon conviction of adultery. The king’s last marriage, in 1543, was to Katherine Parr, who was to outlive Henry as she had her two previous husbands.

DEBASEMENT OF THE COINAGE

If enclosures were a major source of discontent in the realm, the debasement of the coinage between 1542 and 1547 produced even greater hardships; prices jumped sharply and rents rose to catch up with the price spiral. Only the King and the cloth-export trade prospered from the debasement. Henry VIII acquired metal extracted from the coinage valued at £227,000. The sale of cloth jumped when the pound sterling dropped in

value on the foreign exchange, permitting increased purchases of English exports.

Significance of Henry’s Reign

Henry’s reign was remarkably stable considering the religious, political, and economic revolution that was taking place. Henry had the capacity to control events and mold them to his own and the nation’s interests. Selfish, ruthless with individuals, and degenerate in his old age, King Henry was largely successful in his objectives because he understood the times and his policies reflected the feelings of a sufficient number of his subjects. Parliament would not have followed him so readily if it had been otherwise. In accomplishing his goals Parliament became an essential part of the machinery of government, even if it was used, along with the Henrician Church, as an instrument of royal strategy. The consequences of this “political reformation” were profound because the assertion of the omnipotence of the king in Parliament—or “the unlimited sovereignty of statute”—replaced the medieval concept of Parliament as a House of Commons.

EDWARD VI AND THE PROTESTANT REACTION

Throughout Edward’s brief reign (1547–1553) England was again subject to the factionalism of rule by regency. In those years the Henrician Church veered sharply to more Protestant doctrines and practices under the leadership of Edward’s three most influential advisors, the Duke of Somerset, the Duke of Northumberland, and Archbishop Crammer.

The Council of Regency

Edward VI, who was barely ten years old when he became king, was a precocious, serious, but sickly child. His government was plagued with social and economic problems, war with Scotland, and financial difficulties inherited from his father. Although King Henry had prepared for Edward’s minority rule by setting up a regency council of sixteen with a carefully balanced membership of conservatives and reformers, the reformers were the more powerful and the king’s uncle, Edward Seymour, assumed full authority as Lord Protector.

The Protectorship of Somerset, 1547–1549

Edward Seymour, duke of Somerset, was ambitious and well-meaning, but unschooled in political maneuvering and in administration. He was a moderate reformer in religion and encouraged religious toleration and a move toward Protestant doctrines.

RELIGIOUS CHANGE

Somerset called Parliament in to session in 1547 and had the treason and heresy acts repealed. A committee headed by Archbishop Cranmer reformed the order of public worship by issuing the first Book of Common Prayer (1549) with the approval of Parliament. The Act of Uniformity required its use in all public worship. The prayer book combined the majesty and the cadence of former ceremonies with a simplified communion service in the English language. When the religiously conservative Six Articles were repealed, the country folk of the west rose in protest, demanding the restoration of the old service and the Six Articles. At the same time, the radical Protestants demanded a repudiation of all Catholic customs, and mobs expressed their fanaticism and opposition to religious images by smashing cathedral windows and destroying religious statuary. Hugh Latimer of Oxford eloquently preached the need for further religious and social change. Somerset removed Catholic sympathizers from the Council.

SCOTLAND

Somerset invaded Scotland to hasten the negotiations that Henry VIII had arranged for the marriage of Mary Stuart to Edward VI. Although the Scots were defeated in battle at Pinkie (1547), they were not intimidated and dispatched Mary to France to marry the Dauphin (heir to the French throne) instead.

SOCIAL UNREST

Religious and economic changes created frustration and uprisings that were gently dealt with by Somerset who sympathized with the poor and attempted a few social reforms. The greed of the landlords in forcing the enclosures, the inflation from the continued debasement of the coinage, the confiscation of the endowed chapels and the plunder of the churches, and the disendowment of all town guilds except those in London increased the miseries of the poor and culminated in Kett's Rebellion near Norwich (1549) which was put down by John Dudley, earl of Warwick.

THE FALL OF SOMERSET

The inability of Somerset to ameliorate the economic distress, even after he had Parliament investigate the enclosure problems (the John Hales commission), and the diplomatic setback in France after renewal of war provided grounds for opposition. More important, Somerset antagonized the propertied classes with his ideas on social reform. As a result the Earl of Warwick (now entitled the Duke of Northumberland) ingratiated himself with King Edward, built up a party of reaction that included the Roman Catholic faction, and had Somerset ousted in 1549. A few years later Somerset was arrested on a charge of high treason and executed.

**The Protectorship of Northumberland, 1549-1553**

Northumberland was an opportunist motivated by an insatiable lust for power. He favored a more radical Protestantism for political purposes and gambled on controlling the succession to the throne.

RELIGIOUS DEVELOPMENTS

Under Northumberland religious changes became more far-reaching: the vacillating and timid, yet scholarly, Cranmer repudiated the doctrine of transubstantiation in the Holy Communion; Lutheran and Calvinistic refugees and professors arrived in large numbers from the Continent; clergy were allowed to marry; and the Catholic bishops Bonner and Gardiner were replaced by aggressive reformers, such as John Hooper, bishop of Gloucester, and Nicholas Ridley, bishop of London. The Second Act of Uniformity (1552) authorized the second Book of Common Prayer which made Holy Communion essentially an act of remembrance and ended oral confession. The next year the Forty-Two Articles of Faith defined the faith of the Church of England in terms that reflected both Lutheran (justification by faith) and Calvinistic (symbolic interpretation of the sacraments) influence.

SUCCESSION SCHEMES

Realizing that King Edward was dying of consumption, Northumberland persuaded him to alter the succession in order to keep Mary Tudor off the throne and prevent her from restoring Catholicism in England. Northumberland's scheme was to marry his son to the attractive Lady Jane Grey, granddaughter of Henry VIII's sister, Mary, and have Edward name her as heir. The dying king agreed and the Privy Council felt it prudent to assent.

LADY JANE GREY

Lady Jane Grey reigned only nine days after the death of Edward. Protestants did not join Lady Jane's cause as Northumberland had anticipated; furthermore, his army deserted him because they feared his designs more than they did the religious identity of Mary. All England flocked to Mary's support when she entered London in triumph to be crowned Queen. Northumberland turned Catholic, but this did not save him from the block. Otherwise Mary was lenient to his supporters.

## MARY TUDOR AND THE CATHOLIC REACTION

Mary Tudor, England's first ruling queen, had experienced an unhappy and fearful childhood in the court of Henry VIII, but through it all she had remained courageous and completely devoted to Catholicism. Her policies were dominated by two overriding convictions—the need to end England's heresy by restoring the Roman Catholic faith, and the value of a close alliance with her mother's native land, Spain.

### *The Return of Catholicism*

Queen Mary at first was rather tolerant in her efforts to turn back the clock to pre-Reformation days, but when opposition and revolts hampered her progress, she became impatient and intolerant and won the name of "Bloody Mary." She was as obstinate as her father, but without his political awareness of national sentiment.

### MARY'S PARLIAMENTS

The Queen immediately pressured the three Parliaments of 1553–1555 to rescind the religious legislation of Edward's reign, to revive the old heresy laws, and to petition the Pope through Cardinal Pole to have England received back into the Catholic Church. Parliament, however, balked at her demands to restore confiscated monastic lands. By administrative action she forced Continental preachers and exiles to leave the country, replaced Protestant bishops with Catholic prelates, and revived Catholic liturgy.

### CATHOLIC MARRIAGE

The Catholic Emperor who dominated Europe was Charles V. Mary Tudor was eager to marry his son, Archduke Philip, and thereby bring England into the powerful Catholic empire. Mary proceeded with plans for her marriage to Philip II of Spain, champion of Catholic orthodoxy, in spite of Lord Chancellor Gardiner's warning and the noisy opposition of her subjects. Only reluctantly did Parliament agree after guarantees were given that Philip would not drag England into his Continental wars against France, and that he would have no rights to the throne of England if Mary died childless. Even so, the marriage announcement triggered three rebellions in 1554. The most serious of these was organized in Kent under the leadership of Sir Thomas Wyatt, the son of the poet. His followers were joined by troops who had defected from the Queen. The rebels could have captured Mary if they had not been delayed in their attack on London, but by the time they entered London, loyal troops had been assembled and the rebels were defeated. Although Lady Jane Grey was not implicated in the uprising, she and her husband were put to death along with Wyatt.

**PERSECUTION OF PROTESTANTS**

By 1555 Queen Mary, sickly and slighted by her husband, tried to speed up the pace of orthodoxy by burning out Protestantism. However, the three hundred burnings at Smithfield, including those of Bishops Hooper, Latimer, Ridley, and Archbishop Crammer, backfired and evoked sympathy for the persecuted and quickly turned public opinion against Mary and her cause. Ironically her policy of persecution contributed significantly to the permanence of Protestantism in England.

### *Foreign Policy*

Mary's foreign policy was no more successful than her domestic policy. Declining trade, a recalcitrant Parliament that was opposed to voting taxes for the Queen, and the growing influence of Calvinism in Scotland made her efforts in foreign policy appear fitful. In addition, the quarrel between Pope Paul IV and King Philip, her husband, complicated Mary's religious loyalties. Philip enlisted Mary's aid in 1557 in fighting France for purely Spanish objectives. The English were humiliated by the loss of their last French possession, Calais, in the war.

### *Death of Mary Tudor*

The disastrous but brief career of Mary Tudor came to an end with her death in November 1558. Mary had tried to restore the past but had failed to take into account English nationalism which resented subservience to either Rome or Madrid. The result was that both her life and her reign were controversial, largely barren, and tragic.

**T**he fear of another disrupted succession to the throne, which had plagued the fifteenth century, also preoccupied the Tudors, so much so that Henry VII, through a papal dispensation, betrothed his second son to the widow of his deceased son Arthur, and Henry VIII dared to break with the Roman Catholic Church in his desperate bid for a male heir. Unlike the Lancastrian and Yorkist years, the succession held firm for the Tudors in spite of great risks encountered by each monarch.

Central to the sixteenth century was a vibrant, self-conscious nationalism. Henry VIII understood its potential and manipulated it to accomplish his goals; his daughter Mary resisted it, seeking to turn back the clock, only to fail miserably. Religious nationalism, as expressed in the independent Church of England, was the most powerful manifestation of the Tudor revolution in government. By midcentury England had become a self-conscious, sovereign nation, repudiating loyalty to all foreign authority. Supreme power was centered in the king in Parliament. At the same time the medieval household administration of government was transferred into a national bureaucratic administration. Thomas Cromwell was a principal architect in both transformations.

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**8**

**Elizabethan England:  
1558-1603**

- 1558 Elizabeth I accedes to the throne upon the death of Mary  
1560 Scottish Parliament breaks relations with Rome and adopts a Calvinistic  
profession of faith  
1562 Thirty-Nine Articles of Faith are adopted by Church convocation as the  
doctrine of the Church of England  
1564 Birth of William Shakespeare in Stratford-on-Avon  
1572 St. Bartholomew's Day Massacre of French Huguenots and Elizabeth's ally,  
Admiral Coligny  
1577-1580 Sir Francis Drake sails around the world in his vessel the *Golden Hind*  
1587 Execution of Mary Queen of Scots  
1588 Spanish Armada and its attempted invasion of England is repulsed by the  
English navy and fierce storms  
1596 Publication of Edmund Spenser's most famous poem, *The Faerie Queen*  
1598 Irish rebellion against Elizabeth led by Hugh O'Neill, earl of Tyrone  
1600 East India Company is chartered  
1601 Elizabethan Poor Law gives authority to the state to take over the earlier  
role of the Church in administering charity  
1603 Tudor dynasty ends with the death of Elizabeth



**A**fter Mary's dismal reign England passed to one of its most glorious ages under Elizabeth I. During her long reign (1558-1603) Queen Elizabeth practiced moderation in an age of religious and political fanaticism and provided peace and prosperity for her nation.

Elizabeth also understood and stimulated the tide of nationalism enveloping England so that a spirit of self-confidence developed in her subjects that was perhaps unmatched in English history. Like her father, Henry VIII, and unlike her half-sister, Mary, she had superb political instincts and carried the nation with her in all her decisions.

The Queen was not an originator in government; rather she gave free reign to her subjects and allied their interests with her state policies. Parliament had little quarrel with the Queen, in part because no monarch became as popular as Elizabeth or won such loyalty from the people.

## THE RELIGIOUS SETTLEMENT

Elizabeth came to the throne with the nation at war, the treasury empty, and the nation bitterly divided on religion. The failure of her sister to restore Catholicism was not lost on Elizabeth. Besides, she had not forgotten the fact that she was a child of a marriage that the Catholic Church refused to recognize. Therefore, it was only logical that Elizabeth should drop the catholicizing policy of Mary. The outcome was the establishment of a national Church of England that settled for a compromise between Roman Catholicism and Protestantism. Its doctrines were broad enough to satisfy most of her subjects and to spare England the religious wars that wracked France and Germany.

## Character of the Queen

When Elizabeth came to the throne at the age of twenty-five, her subjects were very skeptical about serving another female monarch after their experience with Mary. However, the Queen soon demonstrated that she possessed the abilities to rule with wisdom and to show strength of leadership without alienating herself from her subjects. Although she was vain and iron-willed like her father, she also had remarkable political acumen and a personal magnetism that attracted devoted followers. She loved power, but her shrewd mind knew when to concede small points in order to win major ones. Unlike Mary, Elizabeth understood that the strength of the monarchy, since it lacked a royal army, must be built upon popular consent. Like her father, Elizabeth was well-educated; she loved literature and could speak and write six languages. She also loved England and identified herself successfully with the aspirations and prejudices of her people.

## The Elizabethan Compromise

Elizabeth was neither bigoted nor particularly religious, but she could not avoid involvement in the intense religious climate of the times. Her religious settlement restored Protestantism, created a national church and a clergy responsible to the Crown, and produced a church service that was made binding by an act of Parliament. It was, in effect, a lay revolution carried out by the Crown and by the House of Commons over the will of the bishops.

## PARLIAMENTARY RELIGIOUS ACTS

Queen Elizabeth's first Parliament in 1559 repealed the heresy acts of Mary's reign and passed the Act of Supremacy, which abolished papal allegiance and recognized Elizabeth as Supreme Governor of the Church of England. Parliament then passed the Act of Uniformity to establish the only legal form of public worship, and set up the Court of the High Commission to enforce it. In 1562 Cranmer's Forty-two Articles of Faith were modified to Thirty-Nine and adopted by convocation; in 1571 they were imposed by Parliament as the doctrine of the Anglican Church. The Articles, with certain revisions, have remained the basic doctrines of faith of the Anglican Church. All government and church officials were required to take an oath of allegiance to the new Queen and governance of the Church. Again, as under Henry VIII and Edward VI, these religious changes were passed by Parliament rather than by Church convocation. Except for the bishops appointed by Mary, the vast majority of the clergy accepted the religious settlement. These Catholic prelates lost their positions and were replaced by Protestant clergy. Matthew Parker, a noted Protestant scholar, became Archbishop of Canterbury. If the religious settlement did not evoke much enthusiasm, neither did it provoke much protest, and it went into effect with little friction or persecution at first.

## LATER RELIGIOUS DEVELOPMENTS

The Elizabethan settlement, however, did not please Roman Catholics or radical Protestants. Both made efforts to promote their religious viewpoints at the expense of the settlement and brought upon themselves increasing restrictions. The Catholics suffered most because their religious loyalties were also perceived as a threat to the Tudor state.

**Roman Catholics.** The government's refusal to persecute passive Catholics upset the more militant Catholics who saw their cause withering when their coreligionists found they could live quite comfortably under the Elizabethan settlement. When Pope Pius V excommunicated Elizabeth in 1570 and absolved her subjects from allegiance to her, religious peace disappeared as many English Catholics were forced to choose between their faith and their Queen. By 1580 over one hundred Catholic priests, trained on the Continent under Jesuit leadership, were back in England reawakening

Catholic opposition to Elizabeth. Mary Queen of Scots was recognized by Rome as the only lawful Catholic candidate for the English throne, and the Pope and leading Catholic monarchs on the Continent backed plots on Elizabeth's life.

The government counterattacked by increasing its powers of repression. Fines jumped from one shilling to £20 a month for nonattendance at the established Church. Saying or hearing Mass brought imprisonment. After 1581, executions of proselyting Catholics increased. Elizabeth claimed that she punished for political treason, but the cause motivating the Catholic resistance was their faith. Approximately two hundred Catholics were executed during her reign.

**The Puritans.** While the Catholics were challenging the Anglican settlement from without, members within the Anglican Church were also demanding changes. The Puritans wanted to purge all practices that in any way still reflected papal recognition; they favored a more Calvinistic doctrine and wanted a presbyterian, rather than an episcopal, form of Church government. The House of Commons became increasingly Puritan in its sympathies and tried to remodel the doctrine and organization of the Church with legislation introduced by ardent Puritans. Queen Elizabeth blocked all changes, arguing that religion, like foreign policy and the succession to the throne, was an exclusive preserve of the monarchy and not the business of Parliament. Thwarted in Parliament, the Puritans turned to congregational meetings and pamphlet warfare. Thomas Cartwright, dismissed from Cambridge for his Puritan beliefs, was one of the leading polemicists to argue for a Church government on the model found in Calvinistic Switzerland.

**The Separatists.** The radical Protestants who considered the reform of the Anglican Church hopeless formed separate organizations outside of it. They were known usually by the names of their founders—Brownists (Robert Browne), Barrowists (Norman Barrow)—and were predecessors of the Congregationalists. They stressed congregational autonomy and separation of church and state.

**Government Response.** The government took repressive measures against Separatist groups because they repudiated the national church, and because the government considered religious uniformity essential to political unity. The powers of the Court of High Commission were enlarged to permit it to try all cases of nonconformity. Soon Brownists and English Anabaptists were forced to flee the country. In 1583 Elizabeth appointed John Whitgift, the severest critic of the Puritans, Archbishop of Canterbury. Immediately he used his position and the power of the court to penalize opponents without and within the Church.

### *John Knox and the Church of Scotland*

The Scottish Church on the eve of the Reformation was both corrupt and wealthy and seemingly ripe for reform. The course of religious change was largely a result of the leadership of John Knox and the political and personal issues created by Mary Stuart. In contrast to England the Reformation in Scotland was promoted by the nobility over the opposition of the Crown.

#### JOHN KNOX (1505-1572)

Knox was a priest actively interested in the reform of the Church and strongly opposed to the French-Catholic regency in Scotland. While in exile on the Continent because of his beliefs, he became a disciple of John Calvin in Geneva. He returned to Scotland in 1558—the same year that the Dauphin of France married Mary Stuart and publicized her right to the English throne. Since the Scots feared absorption into a French-Catholic empire, four Protestant nobles formed a group called the Lords of the Congregation and requested major Church reforms from the regent, Mary of Guise (mother of Mary Stuart). When the demands were rejected, Knox rallied the reformers with his evangelistic zeal, and civil war broke out. Only the reluctant intervention by Queen Elizabeth saved the reformers from defeat by the regent's French army.

#### TREATY OF EDINBURGH, 1560

The terms of the treaty required the French to withdraw from Scotland and ended three centuries of Franco-Scottish ties. The treaty also contributed to the triumph of Protestantism over Catholicism in Scotland and England. The firm alliance of these two Protestant countries permitted a longer peace between them than heretofore.

#### THE SCOTTISH PARLIAMENT

In 1560 the Scottish Parliament broke relations with Rome, banned the Mass, and adopted a Calvinistic profession of faith and a book of discipline prepared by the first General Assembly of the Church of Scotland. When Mary of Guise died that same year, a council of twelve was set up to govern Scotland until Mary Stuart returned from France.

## ELIZABETHAN FOREIGN POLICY

For a quarter of a century Elizabeth maintained a calculated and precarious neutrality in foreign affairs. The fact that neither France nor Spain, the Continent's two Catholic "super powers," subdued the much weaker England was due to the rivalry between these two Catholic countries.

and even more to the astute diplomacy of Elizabeth and her brilliant statesmen. With the breathing spell won by this period of nominal peace, England increased national finances, strengthened its commercial and naval power, and developed self-confidence.

### The Queen's Advisors

Undoubtedly, the success of Elizabeth's reign was related to her ability to govern well and to her selection of wise and loyal advisors for both domestic and foreign policies. Like Henry VIII, she became an astute political manager and diplomat. Elizabeth had several shallow court favorites who pleased her vanity, but to hold major offices in the Privy Council she chose experienced and devoted laymen, largely from the gentry class. William Cecil, later Lord Burghley, was secretary and chief counselor for forty years. His brother-in-law, Sir Nicholas Bacon, was lord chancellor. Robert Dudley, earl of Leicester, was another of the Queen's closest favorites. Sir Francis Walsingham served as ambassador to France and with Cecil organized an effective intelligence service to protect the Queen from foreign attempts on her life.

### The Diplomacy of Neutrality

The rivalry between France and Spain was Elizabeth's chief asset in 1558. For the next thirty years she used her shrewdness and her marriagable hand to preserve England from foreign attack and to make the nation prosperous and confident of its abilities.

#### FRANCE

In 1559 the Treaty of Cateau-Cambrésis, which ended the war between France and her enemies, Spain and England, gave Elizabeth the peace that she considered essential to the national welfare and her own survival. France now became England's most immediate threat when King Francis II openly supported the claim of his wife, Mary Stuart of Scotland, to the English throne. However, his sudden death in 1560 left his young widow shorn of French support. The outbreak of the religious wars between Catholics and Huguenots (French Protestants) in 1562 caused Elizabeth to intervene on the side of the Huguenots and to send troops to Le Havre. The war with France was a blunder, and the English garrison in France surrendered in 1563. Calais was not recovered, and the whole affair was an object lesson to Elizabeth and Cecil. Thereafter, they gave aid secretly to the Huguenots while holding France in line by considering marriage offers from King Charles IV and later from his brothers, the Duke of Anjou and the Duke of Alençon.

#### SPAIN

At first Spain supported Elizabeth and her title to the throne. Despite his hatred of heretics, Philip II was unwilling to have England brought back into the Catholic fold as a province of his enemy, France. He therefore proposed

marriage to Elizabeth. The Queen was hard put to decline because she could not risk a Spanish-French coalition against her, but neither could she bear Spanish-Catholic domination if she accepted. With typical contrivance she procarrastinated so long over Philip's proposal that he finally took a French wife. Gradually, English-Spanish relations worsened as France dropped its designs on England, and as Elizabeth and Philip became the recognized leaders of the Protestant and Catholic camps. By avoiding any deliberate offense against Spain, Elizabeth kept the peace. But she condoned raids on Spanish shipping and colonies by English seamen and gave secret aid to Spain's rebelling subjects in the Netherlands. In turn, Philip aided plots to place Mary Stuart on the English throne.

#### IRELAND

During much of her reign Elizabeth was engaged in suppressing rebellions in Ireland where Catholic loyalty continued to be intense. A serious revolt occurred in 1598 when Hugh O'Neill, earl of Tyrone, enlisted the aid of Spain and the Pope and crushed the English army at Blackwater. After Elizabeth's court favorite, the Earl of Essex, proved to be a worthless field commander in restoring English authority, Lord Mountjoy defeated both the Irish and Spaniards in Ireland and again, for a time, there was the peace of submission in Ireland.

### The Threat of Mary Stuart

The young widow, Mary Stuart, returned to Scotland from France in 1561 <sup>contend</sup> with neither the Protestant supremacy won in her absence, nor with her position as only Queen of Scotland. She spent her days intriguing and becoming Queen of England as well. Mary Stuart was a fascinating and passionate woman who found the drab and austere Scottish court contrary to her style of living. In 1565 she married her cousin, Lord Darnley, who was a descendant of Henry VII of England. This marriage further strengthened her claim to the English succession. During the next three years Mary succeeded in alienating most of her subjects, both Protestant and Catholic. She quickly lost the support of the Protestant Lords and confided constantly in her private secretary, David Rizzio, who was murdered before her eyes by her jealous husband. After giving birth to a son, Mary fell desperately in love with a Protestant border lord, the Earl of Bothwell, who superintended the murder of Darnley. Upon obtaining a divorce from his wife, Bothwell and Mary were married according to Protestant rites.

These events aroused Protestants and Catholics to rebel against the Queen. Mary was imprisoned and forced to abdicate in favor of her son, James VI. In 1568 Mary escaped from prison, tried and failed to regain her throne, and fled to England to beg sanctuary from her cousin, Elizabeth. For the next nineteen years Mary Stuart served as a magnet for plots against Elizabeth. The royal advisors urged Elizabeth to sentence Mary to death

because her very presence was a threat to the Queen's security; but Elizabeth, aware of her own mother's fate, disliked the idea of beheading monarchs and refused to act.

### Marriage Diplomacy

Parliament and the people were anxious for Elizabeth to marry in order to preserve the Tudor and Protestant succession. There was no doubt that if the heir presumptive, Mary Stuart, came to the throne, a religious and civil war was almost a certainty. Yet, if the Queen was to marry an English lord, this too would create jealousy among her nobles. In the first two years of her reign Elizabeth received fifteen foreign proposals of marriage, most of them from Catholic princes; however, she preferred her independence. Certainly, her father's six marriages and Mary Tudor's sorry match had not served as very inspiring examples. Besides, Elizabeth's marriageable state gave her great flexibility in foreign diplomacy and an opportunity to play her hand with almost Machiavellian detachment. She apparently had real affection for only one suitor: Robert Dudley, earl of Leicester.

### Plots Against Elizabeth

As long as Mary Stuart remained alive and in England, there were repeated conspiracies against the life of Elizabeth. The plots had as their objectives the full recognition of Mary Stuart as Queen of England and the reestablishment of Catholicism. The first serious threat was the rising of the northern earls in 1569. The old nobility of the north were reluctant to submit to the authority of Cecil and other "new men" who were administering the Tudor state. Their plan called for the Duke of Norfolk to wed Mary and reign with her after Elizabeth's death, thereby restoring the power of the old nobility in London. The rebellion, led by Norfolk and the Earls of Westmorland and Northumberland, was easily crushed because English Catholics failed to support it. Northumberland and eight hundred rebel recruits were executed on orders from Elizabeth.

Other conspiracies were the Ridolfi Plot (1571), the Throckmorton Plot (1583) and the Babington Plot (1586). The last of these was planned by Anthony Babington. It was discovered by Elizabeth's councillor, Walsingham, who allowed it to develop until he had names and evidence. It was this evidence that finally persuaded Elizabeth to consent to Mary's execution. Babington and his associates were killed, and Mary was found guilty by both Parliament and the law courts. Elizabeth procrastinated until February 1587, before she finally signed Mary's death warrant.

## THE WAR WITH SPAIN

The drift of events led England into a war with Spain that Elizabeth and Cecil had struggled to avert for decades. By 1588 the confrontation was watched with keen interest all over Europe for its outcome would have religious and political consequences affecting the whole Continent. The Armada, which Spain claimed was "invincible," failed, and Spain's great prestige began to wane; nevertheless, the Armada was the beginning, and not the end, of the war against Spain. In English history, the legend of the Armada, like the Magna Charta, became a heroic symbol of the defense of freedom against tyranny, whether foreign or royal.

By 1580 only England seemed to stand in the way of Spain's military and political hegemony over Europe. King Philip II persuaded himself that for religious, commercial, political, and personal reasons he had cause to invade England.

### RELIGIOUS RIVALRY

Philip was convinced that his divinely inspired mission was to restore religious orthodoxy to Europe. Of the Protestant triumvirate (William of Orange in Holland, Admiral Coligny, leader of the French Huguenots, and Elizabeth) only Elizabeth was left in his path. Coligny was murdered by French Catholics in 1572, and William by an assassin in Spanish employment in 1584. By elimination Elizabeth was the obvious leader of Protestant Europe, and Catholic plots on her life were attempted routinely, but without success.

### MARITIME FRICTION

In 1580 Spain annexed Portugal, and their combined colonial empires gave Philip fabulous overseas wealth. But for over a quarter of a century English adventurers ("sea dogs") had been sailing the Atlantic and the Spanish Main, capturing treasure ships, breaking the Spanish monopoly on the slave trade, and suffering few casualties. These adventurers, among whom the most famous were Sir John Hawkins, Sir Francis Drake, and Sir Richard Grenville, were never publicly supported by the Crown; however, Elizabeth backed them privately, knighted them, and took her share of the profits. Goaded to fury, the Spaniards saw no way of assuring control of the seas and stopping this pirating without defeating England.

### THE WAR IN THE NETHERLANDS

The Protestant provinces of the Spanish Netherlands were still in open revolt against Spain because of the steady support from the English. Philip knew that Dutch resistance would be maintained so long as the rebels



received aid from England and England controlled the sea route to Antwerp. Elizabeth supported the Dutch rebels because she feared that a Spanish reconquest would end a profitable trade with the Netherlands and prepare the way for an invasion of England.

#### EFFECTS OF MARY STUART'S EXECUTION

Mary's death forced the issue of succession since she had been the intended instrument of the Catholics for regaining the throne of England from within. While Mary Stuart lived, Philip hesitated to risk Spanish money and blood to win England for her, because she favored France over Spain. Within a week of the news of Mary's execution, Philip moved rapidly with plans for an invasion, even though there was no assurance that English Catholics would rally to the banner of a hated Spaniard when Spanish troops landed in England.

### *The Spanish Armada*

Philip's plan was to send a great armada of ships to the Netherlands and ferry the Duke of Parma and the best army in Europe to England, where he hoped that English Catholics would rise in revolt. The whole venture from the beginning was plagued by mishaps. Spain's leading admiral, the Marquis of Santa Cruz, died and was replaced by the old Duke of Medina Sidonia. Sir Francis Drake sailed into Cadiz harbor in 1587 and sank Spanish ships at anchor, which delayed the expedition for a year. The army of the Duke of Parma was blockaded by Dutch and English forces and did not rendezvous as planned. Nevertheless, on July 29, 1588, the Armada of 131 ships was sighted by the English in the Channel.

#### THE CHANNEL BATTLE.

For nine days Admiral Howard's English fleet of smaller and faster ships kept up a running battle but could not break the crescent-shaped formation of the Spaniards. While the Armada anchored for provisions at Calais, the English drove the fleet into confusion with fire ships. On the next day the English cannonade inflicted heavy damage in the decisive battle fought off Gravelines. Unable to reach Parma, collect supplies, or retrace its course, the Armada sailed north around the British Isles where fierce storms did even more damage than the English navy. In September the incompetent Medina Sidonia returned to Spain with two-thirds of his fleet—the invasion had failed.

#### SIGNIFICANCE OF THE ARMADA

The defeat at sea did not crush Spain or immediately transfer command of the seas from Spain to England. More treasure ships reached Spain in the next fifteen years than in any other similar period. Nevertheless, the defeat of the Armada had important consequences. It saved England from Parma's powerful army and at the same time united English Catholics and Protestants

against a common enemy. Equally important, the defeat of the Armada prevented the imposition of both a Catholic and a Spanish hegemony over Europe by force and gave heart to the Dutch rebels to continue their fight for independence. There were also repercussions in the colonial world as the breaking of Spanish sea power opened up new regions in both the Far East and in America. English and Dutch squadrons challenged the fading Portuguese empire in the East, and the French and the English no longer hesitated to settle America. Finally, to Elizabeth and her people the events in the year 1588 reinforced their belief that God and good fortune were on their side, and over the years the legend of victory became an increasingly eulogized example of the heroism of the English spirit.

### *The War Continues*

The Armada marked the beginning of a war with Spain that dragged on for the remaining fourteen years of Elizabeth's reign. The English counter-attack in 1589 under Drake was a fiasco. An invasion force of 150 ships and 1,800 men attacked Spain but failed miserably, as disease decimated the land army, and Drake refused to attack Lisbon. English mariners intermittently harassed the Spanish in the Azores, and in 1595 both Drake and Hawkins died in an expedition to the West Indies. Elizabeth was drawn more deeply into the struggles on the Continent when she provided English troops to serve in the Netherlands and in northern France against Spain. Between 1589 and 1595 the Queen sent five expeditions to support the Protestant Henry of Navarre in France and to block Spain's designs on France. Although Henry became a Catholic in 1593 to win Paris, neither he nor Elizabeth abandoned their Anglo-French alliance until France concluded a peace with Spain in 1598. King Philip supported the Irish rebellion with a second armada, but it too was dispersed by a gale. The Irish rebellion preoccupied England and cost the treasury much more than did the repulse of the Armada in 1588. To finance the war Elizabeth was forced to grant monopolies, increase customs, and sell £876,322 of Crown lands, as well as raise an additional £2 million in taxes.

### *ECONOMIC AND COLONIAL EXPANSION*

During the Elizabethan Age prices, trade, and prosperity increased as the commercial revolution and the rise of small industry improved the lot of the merchant, the gentry, and the yeoman. In contrast, the depressed out-of-work classes often became a floating population of vagabonds and unemployed. The government recognized the need for dealing with the



unemployed poor and introduced important economic and industrial legislation in Parliament.

**Agriculture and Labor**

Since the country gentry who administered the laws did not push any enforcement that conflicted with their own interests, the enclosure movement continued in spite of laws passed to restrict it. Wheat-raising competed with sheep-raising as the rapid growth of towns increased the demand for foodstuffs.

Elizabeth called in the debased currency early in her reign and replaced it with sound money to restore the country's credit. However, she still had the problem of unemployed poor drifting around the country and supporting any rebellion. Because of this the government passed more economic legislation—the Parliament of 1563 alone passed fourteen statutes—than in any previous reign. The Statute of Artificers (or Statute of Apprentices) of 1563 transferred the regulation of labor and industry from local to national control in an effort to halt vagrancy by promoting full employment. The act attempted to control and recruit labor by enforcing the seven-year apprenticeship in the trades, requiring unskilled labor to work in agriculture in rush seasons if needed, and providing for local justices of the peace to regulate wages and hours.

**Welfare Laws**

The plague and the harvest failures of the 1590s caused the government to nationalize poor relief because local, municipal relief was too limited and erratic to handle the distress. Here the state took over the earlier role of the Church in administering charity, motivated more by fear than by humanitarianism of what wandering, hungry people could do. The Poor Laws of 1597 and 1601 made the parish the local unit of welfare administration and responsible for the poor relief of its residents. Stiff penalties were levied for vagrancy. Each parish appointed four overseers who levied rates (compulsory taxes) on property owners in order to build workhouses and provide work and wages for the unemployed. Although considered harsh, the Poor Laws became the cornerstone for much later social welfare legislation.

**Commerce and Industry**

The cloth trade continued as the leading industry. In foreign trade the Merchant Adventurers replaced the Staplers as the most powerful export group after they received a royal charter in 1564. Shipbuilding and coal-mining grew rapidly, and new industries, such as salt and alum, became important. The Tudors tightened state controls in order to encourage home industries and to promote a favorable balance of trade. This policy, sometimes termed "mercantilism," was done on a piecemeal basis for specific objectives (as to help fishermen or export traders by legislative acts) and not as part of any doctrinaire view on economics.

**Colonies and Chartered Companies**

The reign of Elizabeth is also noted for the expansion of England's overseas exploration and trading activities after a late start. Portugal and Spain took the lead in overseas expansion because those countries had the fleets and power to back up their ventures, whereas England was preoccupied with establishing a new dynasty and a new church. John Cabot in 1497, exploring for an English company, discovered Newfoundland and thus provided England with a basis for future claims to North America. John Hawkins broke into the lucrative Spanish monopoly of the slave trade between Africa and the West Indies at the same time the English naval adventurers were exploring the New World and Sir Francis Drake was making his spectacular voyage around the world (1577–1580). Three relatives, Sir Humphrey Gilbert, Sir Walter Raleigh, and Sir Richard Grenville, backed by a royal charter, tried to colonize Newfoundland (1583) and Virginia (1585, 1587), but their efforts were unsuccessful. Martin Frobisher explored northeastern Canada (1576) while searching for a Northwest Passage. With the rise of the merchant navy English foreign commerce expanded through new trading companies chartered by the Crown; these included the Muscovy Company (1553), the Levant Company (1592), and the East India Company (1600). The influence of English sea power was just beginning to make itself felt.

**THE MACHINERY OF GOVERNMENT**

The so-called Tudor despotism of the sixteenth century was actually an authoritarian, yet popular, government that provided peace and order without resorting to despotism. In the political transformation from a medieval to a national state two important developments took place: The central administration became national and public in scope to replace the medieval practice of the king's household administering primarily his private estate; and the House of Commons increased in size and significance and became a major instrument of government.

**The Administration**

Henry VIII's minister, Thomas Cromwell, was the chief architect of the administrative reform which transformed a royal household administration into centralized administrative machinery that could function effectively regardless of the leadership of the king. Royal administration, both on the local level and in Parliament, relied especially on the rising gentry class; both worked well together, particularly during the years when the Crown and the gentry had the same aims and felt threatened by either civil war or external invasion.

THE CENTRAL GOVERNMENT

The center of administrative control from the time of Henry VIII was the Privy Council; it became a formal executive body that took over the functions formerly handled by household officers. The highest policy decisions, of course, were still made by the monarch. The Council itself was responsible to the sovereign and not to Parliament (in contrast to the British Cabinet today). An enormous increase in Council business took place under Henry VIII and Elizabeth, and specialization of function occurred. The Council also claimed judicial powers as well as supervisory functions over the Councils of the North and the Marches (Wales). Elizabeth made no attempt to demand unanimity among her councillors; in fact, rival factions reflecting different viewpoints appealed to her. In this way she was informed of possible alternatives in policy and no controlling clique could assume to control her. When Parliament was in session, her councillors drafted government bills and piloted them through the two Houses as the Cabinet ministers do today.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT

The substitution of the parish for the earlier manor or village as a local unit of administration was one of the developments of Elizabeth's reign. The church wardens and the overseers of the poor, supported by the county justices of the peace, administered the poor laws under the supervision of the Privy Council. On the county level the post of lord-lieutenant was created in the 1550s whereby a peer, and frequently a Privy councillor, served as the formal contact between the central government and the local administration; he was responsible for the local militia and all emergency measures. However, the justices of the peace were the indispensable officers in local government. The great increase in their number and the greater diversification of their duties reflected the rising power of the gentry and the efficiency of their work. These unpaid local magistrates presided over local courts, regulated new laws on labor and apprentices, kept the peace, enforced the poor laws, and punished vagabonds. Other local officials linking the county with London were the sheriff, the coroner who investigated sudden deaths and empaneled juries, and the vice-admirals of the coastal counties.

The legal profession and legal business expanded greatly in the Tudor period. At the same time the authority of statute law was enhanced by the prominence given to it by Henry VIII and the Reformation Parliament. The Inns of Court and the common law resumed their stature under Elizabeth after faltering in the reigns of Henry VIII and Mary. The regular courts consisted of (1) the Petty Sessions, presided over by two or more justices of the peace, which heard minor charges; (2) the Quarter Sessions, meeting

The Courts

Parliament

four times yearly, which considered more serious county cases; (3) the Assizes where royal judges on circuit presided; and (4) the Common Law Courts at Westminster—King's Bench, Common Pleas, and Exchequer. The prerogative courts of the Crown with no jury were the Chancery, which heard cases of equity and important civil cases; Court of the High Commission, for religious offenses; Court of the North, for northern England; Council of Wales; Court of Castle Chamber, for Ireland; and Court of the Star Chamber.

Parliament became increasingly important as an instrument of government after Henry VIII used it extensively it to complete his break with Rome. Parliamentary proceedings were effectively managed by the Tudors, but the gentry cooperated willingly. Thus the Parliaments did not have to be packed to secure a favorable vote. Under Elizabeth Parliament perfected some procedures: three readings for each bill was established; a standing committee for privileges and disputed elections existed after 1588; and the committee system for examining bills was accepted. At the beginning of each session Parliament claimed from the Queen freedom of speech and freedom from arrest.

HOUSE OF COMMONS AND HOUSE OF LORDS

The Commons gained greatly in power since it represented the growing influence of the middle class—the gentry, the lawyers, and the merchants. The membership of the Commons increased during the sixteenth century from 296 to 462. The Lords often influenced the selection of members to the House of Commons, but as a class they never exerted the power that they had before the Wars of the Roses. All baronial rebellions against the Tudors failed. The new aristocracy was frequently a creation of the Tudors and, therefore, indebted to them; besides, the removal of the abbots from the House of Lords and the royal appointment of the remaining bishops gave the monarch direct control of one-third of the Upper House.

THE TUDOR SYSTEM

The medieval concept of a king with unlimited authority only in certain recognized spheres was somewhat undermined in practice by the Tudors, such as in the dissolution of the monasteries. However, they were astute enough not to enunciate any doctrine of absolutism for, unlike the French king, they had no standing army or professional bureaucracy to back such a claim. Instead, Tudor government relied on the voluntary services of local administrators and on the cooperation of the Crown and its loyal subjects. However, by the end of Elizabeth's reign the House of Commons was becoming vigorous and vocal under such a system and was expanding its privileges.

THE LAST YEARS OF ELIZABETH

By 1590 England felt secure from religious wars and Spanish attack. Therefore, Parliament became restive and grumbled about the cost of the war against Spain and Ireland, censured the Queen for the granting of royal monopolies in 1597, and delayed the passage of bills for as long as four years. Yet direct protest was muted out of respect and affection for the aged Queen; the Commons reserved its opposition for her successor. Elizabeth had refused to name a successor until she reached her deathbed; she then nominated King James VI of Scotland. Her chief advisor, Robert Cecil, son of William Cecil, completed arrangements for a smooth transition of power. In 1603 the dynasty ended with the death of the greatest of the Tudors.

LEARNING AND LITERATURE

The spirit and vitality of the Elizabethan Age is perhaps best expressed in its literature. The Renaissance and the Reformation, in different ways, helped mold this literature which assumed a distinctly English character that reflected the new nationalism and revealed a self-questioning and a self-conscious maturity. The awakening was all the more striking because, except for Chaucer, this caliber of writing was previously lacking in English literature. However, no comparable achievement occurred in education.

Tudor Education

Renaissance scholars turned away from scholasticism and contributed new ideas on learning, especially in the study of Greek classics. The Reformation reduced Church influence on education. But the dissolution of the monasteries under Henry VIII and of the chantries under Edward VI closed many elementary schools when the endowments were lost. Not until the end of Elizabeth's reign did the patronage of clergy and nobility restore the grammar schools. In the universities the Renaissance provided some reforms, but the Reformation also brought on disputes and division, and only later a greater diversity of knowledge and a freer spirit. Oxford was more affected than Cambridge by the Reformation in its monastic and faculty losses, but it continued to be the larger university. Cambridge advanced greatly in size and influence after the Reformation. Elizabeth's inner circle of councillors were all Cambridge men, and the Church, from Crammer to Bancroft, was led by Cambridge scholars. Since Cambridge was more Protestant than Oxford, it stimulated intellectual vigor and controversy as the Puritans grew in power; three of the seven new colleges at Cambridge were established as a direct result of the Puritan impulse. Little change in

Literature

curriculum took place; theology, logic, and philosophy were still the central studies, although the tutorial system began to alter teaching methods. The religious and political controversies prior to the middle of the sixteenth century did not encourage scholarship or literary productivity. The real flowering of Renaissance letters with its amazing range of writing occurred during Elizabeth's reign.

PROSE

The works of Elizabethan prose writers typically reflect the varied interests of the Renaissance. (1) Roger Ascham, Elizabeth's tutor and secretary, produced an admirable treatise on political education in *The Scholemaster*. It was a plea for the study of classical literature and gentle manners in the public schools. (2) Ralph Holinshed's patriotic *Chronicles* became the source materials for the historical plays of Shakespeare and Marlowe. (3) John Lyly portrayed society in two books on court etiquette and mannerisms, *Euphues* and *Euphues and His England*. His ornate, elaborately structured prose became a popular vogue. (4) Richard Hakluyt in his *Principal Navigations, Voyages and Discoveries of the English Nation*, John Leland in *The Laborious Journey*, and William Harrison with his *Description of England* stimulated popular interest in geography and history. (5) The versatile Sir Walter Raleigh, besides being a courtier, financier, explorer, and poet, composed a remarkable *History of the World*. (6) Sir Francis Bacon's *Essays* offered worldly wisdom in an epigrammatic style. His intellectual and philosophical brilliance was observed more sharply in his writings during the reign of James I. (7) Richard Hooker furnished the ablest apologia for the Elizabethan Church with his judicious and balanced *Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity*.

POETRY

Before Elizabeth's reign only three Tudor poets claim recognition: John Skelton (ca. 1460-1529) with his satirical *Speke, Parrot* on Cardinal Wolsey; and Thomas Wyatt (ca. 1503-1542) who, along with Henry Howard, the Earl of Surrey (ca. 1517-1542), introduced the sonnet form to England—Wyatt the Italian or Petrarchan form, Surrey the English or Shakespearean. During Elizabeth's reign came the three leading poets of the century: Sir Philip Sidney, Edmund Spenser, and William Shakespeare. Sidney, a gentleman, scholar, courtier, and knight, was the ideal Elizabethan man of letters. His two most admired works are *Astrophel and Stella* (sonnets) and *The Defence of Poesie*, a lofty and imaginative treatise on the art of poetry. Spenser was the poet's poet and his works provided a new stanza of nine lines, a richness of imagery, and a high seriousness that many later poets imitated. His two most noted works are *The Shepherds' Calendar* and *The*

*Faerie Queene*. Shakespeare's nondramatic poems were written early in his career and consisted of the *Sonnets* and the long narrative poems, *Venus and Adonis* and *Lucrece*.

#### DRAMA

No age approaches the Elizabethan in the excellence and variety of drama. Robert Greene, a bohemian university wit and journalist, wrote the farcical *Friar Bacon* and the historical play *James IV*. Christopher Marlowe died in a tavern brawl before he was thirty, but in his short life he wrote the first great tragedies in blank verse including *Tamburlane*, *The Jew of Malta*, and *The Tragical History of Doctor Faustus*. Shakespeare climaxed the age with his thirty-four plays which so fully captured the temper of the Elizabethans and the human spirit. His plays have continued to be classics because of the universal themes and the characterizations that underlie them. He attempted all types—comedy, tragedy, and history—and triumphed in each area. Other playwrights of the period were Thomas Sackville (*Gorboduc*), Thomas Kyd (*Spanish Tragedy*), Nicholas Udall (*Ralph Roister Doister*), and Ben Jonson (*Every Man in his Humor*).

At first plays were given in courtyards of inns; then beginning in 1576, theaters were built in London which soon became the focus of popular entertainment. The court was the acknowledged center of art and culture, and here the sophisticated, the social climbers, the professional politicians, and the new rich all vied for the honor of Elizabeth's favor.

The last half of the sixteenth century is rightly called "the Elizabethan Age" for the Queen embodied the confidence and character of the emerging nation state and made England a major participant in European and overseas affairs. Elizabeth left as her legacy a firmly established Church of England, domestic peace, a victorious navy, a sound coinage, and a flourishing environment for poets and playwrights. At the end of her reign she also left an increasingly assertive House of Commons that would test its prerogatives with her successor.

Elizabeth was a symbol of unity for England and she wooed her subjects so that the affection they expressed for their sovereign would not be matched again until late in the reign of Queen Victoria. Although religious and political restlessness was evident in Elizabeth's last years, deference for a beloved Queen meant that overt opposition would wait until after her death to assert itself.

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King vs. Parliament:  
1603-1642

- 1603 James VI of Scotland becomes James I of England, uniting the English and Scottish thrones
- 1605 Guy Fawkes' Gunpowder Plot to blow up James I and Parliament fails
- 1607 England's first permanent colony established in Jamestown, Virginia
- 1609 The six northern counties of Ireland (Ulster) are confiscated by the English government and settled with Scottish and English immigrants
- 1611 Publication of the King James or Authorized Version of the Bible
- 1620 English Puritans sail on the *Mayflower* to Plymouth, New England
- 1625 Charles I succeeds his father as King of England and Scotland
- 1628 Petition of Right signed by Charles I
- 1640 Long Parliament convenes

The first two Stuarts attempted to exert Tudor-like authority in England without the tact of the Tudors and came into conflict with the latent, but growing, power of the rising gentry class. "Parliamentary privilege" versus "royal prerogative" became the focal point of the conflict and resulted in the alienation of the House of Commons. At the same time the clash between two unfortunate and often inept Stuart kings and their religiously and politically restless subjects was intensified by problems not resolved by the Tudor monarchs. Inflation, the

rising influence of the gentry, lawyers jealously guarding the common law against royal encroachments, and Puritan dissatisfaction with the Church of England sapped the foundations of the early Stuart monarchy.

THE RELIGIOUS QUESTION

The growing Puritan influence among the gentry and the freedom from foreign invasion meant that the Elizabethan settlement could no longer remain safe from attack. James I, however, had no intention of sacrificing the episcopal structure and his headship of the Church of England. Since the ecclesiastical government was linked so closely to royal authority, King James argued that a retreat in religion was a retreat for royalty. Since neither compromise nor toleration in religion were considered virtues in this age, both the king and the Puritans took unyielding positions.

James's  
Scottish  
Background

When Mary Stuart abdicated the throne and fled for safety to England, her only child became King of Scotland before he was a year old. For the next thirty-nine years James survived the plots of kidnappers, a grasping nobility, militant and strident Presbyterian churchmen, and "a thousand intrigues" to prove himself the adept master of an unruly kingdom. He had received a superior education under the tutorage of George Buchanan and was scholarly and intelligent in a pedantic way. The King was a theorist, understanding books far better than he did his subjects—a French contemporary called him the "wisest fool in Christendom." In the Stuart tradition he believed that he was born to rule. To combat the Scottish Presbyterian Church and his lawless nobility, James argued for the theory of government known as the divine right of kings and wrote a treatise on it to support royal absolutism. James enjoyed hunting, riding, and court favorites, and was inclined to be lazy. He conducted government affairs in an erratic, although successful, manner in Scotland. By the time of Elizabeth's death in England, James was in full control of Scotland and in despotic fashion had effectively practiced his theory of divine right.

ACCESSION OF JAMES

James was overjoyed to become ruler of England and to leave poverty-stricken Scotland and its Presbyterian Church for a richer and more secure kingdom where he could govern the church as well as the state. To that end he had handled his relations with Elizabeth most properly, even to the point of only mildly protesting to her the execution of his mother. Thus in 1603 when the two kingdoms were joined under one crown, it was the easiest accession of any new English dynasty. Elizabeth's acknowledgment, the



support of Robert Cecil and the Privy Council, and the enthusiastic greeting of the people attested to the logic in their choice of James. But the Scottish King never fully grasped the differences between the two kingdoms, and his initial popularity soon faded.

#### RELIGIOUS HOPES

Puritans and Catholics were optimistic that King James would be more sympathetic to their cause than was Elizabeth. The Puritans hoped that his years as King of Presbyterian Scotland would permit them to bring about reforms in England; the Catholics noted that his mother was Catholic and that James had been tolerant of the Catholic faith in Scotland and seemed friendly toward Spain. James could not please both parties and was rather content with the Elizabethan Church.

**Hampton Court Conference, 1604.** Some eight hundred Puritan preachers presented the Millenary Petition to James in which they requested a simpler ritual than that decreed by Elizabeth, a greater emphasis on preaching, and the abolition of certain ceremonies, such as the cross in baptism. They also requested a new translation of the Bible. James granted the petitioners an audience at Hampton but became enraged by their suggestion to abolish the office of bishop. The conference ended with the Puritans dissatisfied and the King critical of their demands. The King's agreement to authorize a new version of the Bible (the King James Version, 1611) was the only constructive result.

**Catholic Plots.** When the early friendliness of King James to the Catholics changed to official disfavor, certain Catholics resorted to plots which threatened his life. The "By-Plot" of 1603 hoped to capture James, whereas the Gunpowder Plot of 1605 aimed at blowing up both the King and Parliament. Guy Fawkes was caught with kegs of gunpowder in the cellar of Parliament just before the session opened. This spectacular plot shocked the country and aroused Parliament to enact additional penalties against the Catholics. The Anglican settlement was not to be altered in the reign of James.

## JAMES AND HIS PARLIAMENTS

Religion and finances became the leading issues generating friction between James and his Parliament. The King never appreciated two important differences between his kingdoms: The power of the nobility and the weakness of Parliament in Scotland were not duplicated in seventeenth-century England. In that sense his rule in Scotland was not a helpful preparation for his rule in England. In medieval England powerful barons had led the

opposition when Parliament challenged the Crown; after 1604 the opposition in Parliament came primarily from the Commons.

In 1604 few established rules existed that clearly indicated the rights and privileges of Parliament. The Commons, however, soon asserted its undefined privileges as inalienable rights and developed a political doctrine to back its position.

#### THE FIRST PARLIAMENT, 1604-1611

The Goodwin Case which arose out of a disputed election created the first clash between the Crown and Parliament. The Commons argued that, and not the court of chancery, was the judge of its own membership. Finally the King yielded, but with little grace. In 1606 the exchequer court found in favor of the King in the Bates Case. The decision recognized the right of the King to levy impositions of duties because there were no limitations on the King's power except his own forbearance. Both merchants and Parliament protested the additional customs. In the session of 1611 James offered to surrender some of his rights, such as wardship, in return for a guaranteed annual income of £2,000,000. However, the negotiations over this "Great Contract" broke down, whereupon James lectured the members on their failure to respect the prerogatives of the Crown and dismissed them. Parliament then sent an "Apology" to James that was actually a defense of their privileges. Such privileges, said the Apology, were derived from law and tradition, and not from the King.

#### THE SECOND (OR ADDED) PARLIAMENT, 1614

After three years of trying to govern without parliamentary grants, King James was forced to call Parliament into session. The Commons demanded the redress of grievances before voting any money bills. After a stormy two-month session James dissolved Parliament because it had not passed any acts or granted him any money. For the next seven years James governed without Parliament, and to obtain revenue he exploited every possible resource at his disposal from forced loans to the selling of titles.

#### THE THIRD PARLIAMENT, 1621

The Thirty Years' War (1618-1648) on the Continent between Catholic and Protestant states caused James to summon this Parliament which promptly retaliated for the dismissal of Chief Justice Coke, the leading opponent of the royal prerogative, in 1616. Resurrecting its old weapon of impeachment, Parliament indicted two courtiers for abusing monopolies and the brilliant Sir Francis Bacon, the King's Chancellor, for receiving bribes. Parliament then examined the second session the King lost his temper over Parliament's insistence on debating foreign policy and dissolved Parliament.

### Parliamentary Privileges

THE FOURTH PARLIAMENT, 1624

The King's last Parliament was the most friendly to him because it was anxious to fight Spain and the Catholic League and to assist the German Protestants. In this session James permitted the members to debate foreign affairs, to impeach his financial genius and Treasurer, the Earl of Middlesex, and to invade the royal prerogative by limiting royal control over monopolies. Parliament subsidized an elaborate expedition against Spain. However, James died in 1625 before the fleet set sail.

Parliamentary Theory

The attack of the Commons on royal prerogatives was supported by the common law courts which had formerly been allies of the Crown. Led by the tough, irascible Sir Edward Coke, Chief Justice of the Court of the King's Bench, the courts supported the assumption that Parliamentary privileges had an ancient, and not necessarily royal origin, that the king was under law (*rex sub lege*), and that the courts were independent of the Crown. They were not, however, as James proved by removing Chief Justice Coke. Nevertheless, the claims of the judges emboldened Parliament to continue its piecemeal encroachments on royal prerogatives. James was never brow-beaten by his Parliaments and only gave in on the matter of royal monopolies because he knew when to compromise. He was wise enough to sense the danger signals and to warn his son, Charles.

Royal Favorites

At first James relied on Elizabeth's chief councillor, Robert Cecil, but gradually new royal favorites replaced Cecil (who died in 1612 as Earl of Salisbury) and the Privy Council in influence. The two leading courtiers were Robert Carr, whom James made Earl of Somerset, and George Villiers, who eventually became Duke of Buckingham. The King's dependence on these incompetents aroused the resentment of the Court. With the rise of favorites the King's councillors lost their influence on parliamentary legislation since they no longer introduced legislation, as they had previously in the days of Elizabeth. "By the third decade of the seventeenth century, the commons were in charge of the initiation,\* formulations, and passage of laws. They were the tail that wagged the dog."

\* George L. Haskins, *The Growth of English Representative Government* (London, 1948), pp. 126-27.

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

James, ever the pacifist, vigorously pursued a policy of peace even under the most trying conditions and succeeded, except during the first and last years of his reign. The 'Thirty Years' War in Germany caught him in a dilemma: He courted favor with Catholic Spain and hoped to marry his son to the Spanish Infanta (princess); at the same time his daughter Elizabeth and her Protestant husband, the Elector of the Palatinate in south Germany, were being besieged by a Catholic coalition determined to oust all Protestant rulers. England's old enmity toward Spain finally brought war in 1624 and reconciled Parliament to the King.

Scotland and Ireland

King James hoped for the union of England and Scotland, but Parliament was opposed to the idea and even refused free trade and English citizenship to the Scots. Except for removing the danger of border warfare and French influence in Scotland, the two countries remained separate nations with a common king for another century. James tried to pacify the Irish by having his deputy terminate martial law, dismiss old charges against Irish rebels, and restore certain tribal lands to Irish tenants. However, the attempt to enforce the Anglican supremacy led to new uprisings in northern Ireland. The English government responded by seizing land in six northern counties and settling Scotch Presbyterians, Welsh, and English in the area known as Ulster. Queen Elizabeth had introduced this Anglo-Protestant colonization, and the Stuarts and Cromwell continued the settlement.

Spain

In 1604 James and Robert Cecil ended the war with Spain that had dragged on since the year of the Armada. The peace halted an expensive and fruitless war, but was unpopular in Parliament, particularly among the Puritans and the commercial class. When James pursued a pro-Spanish policy, he was greatly influenced by Buckingham and the Spanish ambassador, Count Gondomar. James had Sir Walter Raleigh executed to placate Spanish demands and attempted to negotiate a marriage between his heir, Charles, and the Spanish Infanta. Buckingham and Charles went to Spain to complete the negotiations but returned in 1623 humiliated and empty-handed—a slight which turned them into angry foes of Spain. Charles and Buckingham and Parliament eventually prevailed on the King to declare war on Spain in 1624. The twenty-year peace was over, and Buckingham dispatched a series of expeditions to the Continent, all of which were frightful failures. The first expedition to free the Palatinate ruled by James's son-in-law, Frederick, failed because of mismanagement, sickness, and starvation.

**The Thirty Years' War, 1618-1648**

In 1618 bitter religious warfare broke out in Germany between the Protestant Union of principalities and the Catholic League. In Bohemia the Protestants deposed their fanatical Catholic King and invited Frederick, the Elector of the Palatinate and James's son-in-law, to take the throne. The vengeance of the Catholics and the Hapsburg rulers was swift and cruel. After one winter of rule Frederick and Elizabeth (daughter of James) were ousted, and the Palatinate was annexed by Maximilian of the Catholic League. The flight of his daughter from Catholic forces and the failure of his son's marriage negotiations in Spain reversed James's policy of support for Catholic Spain and won him popularity with his subjects. But England had suffered military stagnation for twenty years and was in no position to take effective action.

**CHARLES I**

Parliamentary and Puritan opposition coalesced in King Charles's reign (1625-1649) to challenge his high-handed and small-minded manner of ruling. The King's expensive and futile foreign policy only added to his predicament. By ending the wars and governing without Parliament Charles put off some of his problems, but neither he nor his advisers really understood or cared to grapple with the basic problem that plagued his reign: how to negotiate with a Parliament that refused to accept the traditional royal prerogatives.

**Character of Charles**

The twenty-five-year-old King was more dignified and attractive than his father, but, like his father, he held exalted notions of kingship and relied on royal favorites. Charles was a patron of the arts, a nervous, shy person, highly religious and an affectionate family man. Unfortunately Charles was a disaster as king; he was petty and indecisive and conspicuously lacked the art of political management.

**Foreign Affairs**

After the pacifist policy of his father, Charles and his advisor, the Duke of Buckingham, promoted within four years six reckless military adventures against the German Catholics, Spain, and France, none of which succeeded. Thereafter, Charles, lacking financial subsidies from Parliament, became essentially a spectator in the political-religious maneuvers of the Thirty Years' War.

**SPAIN**

Charles asked his first Parliament (1625) for funds to sustain the war against Spain but refused to discuss his campaign plans with Parliament. When the Commons refused to grant funds, Charles went ahead with his

**Charles and Parliament**

**FRANCE**  
Meanwhile England was also drifting into conflict with France. Charles's marriage in the first week of his reign to Henrietta Maria, sister of Louis XIII, purchased a fleeting friendship with France but raised suspicions that the King was susceptible to Catholic influence. When English ships loaned to France were ordered by Cardinal Richelieu to attack the French Huguenots at La Rochelle, the crews mutinied. Months later war broke out between England and France (1627), and three expeditions were sent to relieve the beleaguered French Protestants at La Rochelle. Buckingham led the second expedition to the Isle of Rhé, where he was repulsed by the French after losing half of his men. In 1630 England made peace with France and Spain, and the nation now became preoccupied with internal controversies.

Since Charles considered such matters as war and peace outside the authority of parliamentary jurisdiction, he did not justify his requests for money. In turn Parliament, led by such squires as John Eliot, Thomas Wentworth, John Pym, and John Hampden, raised a whole list of grievances and claimed additional powers.

**THE FIRST PARLIAMENT, 1625**

Parliamentary opposition to Buckingham and the King's Catholic marriage prevented Charles from receiving more than one-seventh of his financial request, while royal tax revenue on tonnage and poundage were voted for only a year instead of for life as was customary.

**THE SECOND PARLIAMENT, 1626**

The members of Parliament refused to vote war supplies for the King, and John Eliot's oratory led to impeachment proceedings against the Duke of Buckingham. To save his favorite minister, Charles dissolved Parliament and demanded forced loans from taxpayers. This aroused opposition, and arrests were made for refusal to pay. Soldiers were quartered in private homes to save expenses; but the King still required additional revenue.

**THE THIRD PARLIAMENT AND THE PETITION OF RIGHT, 1628**

Charles was forced to summon a third Parliament to raise more money. However, the leaders of Parliament—Eliot, Coke, Pym, and Wentworth—were determined that no subsidy would be granted until the King redressed their grievances. A Petition of Right was drafted which limited royal prerogative and requested the King to protect ancient liberties. It forbade

imprisonment without showing cause, martial law in time of peace, forced loans or taxes without parliamentary consent, and the billeting of soldiers in private homes without consent of the occupants. Charles reluctantly signed the petition in order to have his subsidies approved. The petition, like the Magna Charta of 1215, became, in time, a constitutional landmark in limiting the power of the monarchy, although its immediate effects were slight.

**Second Session, 1629.** Charles dismissed the first session of Parliament to stave off an attempt to remove Buckingham from office. But during the adjournment Buckingham was assassinated by John Felton, a naval officer, and the nation rejoiced as the King grieved. When Parliament reconvened religious grievances took priority over fiscal matters, and the Commons launched an attack on the High Church policies of the Bishops. When the Speaker attempted to adjourn the fruitless session, members held him in his chair while the Commons hastily passed three resolutions condemning anyone who introduced innovations in religion, or who advised levying taxes on tonnage and poundage without parliamentary consent, or who would pay such taxes. When Parliament was finally dissolved, Eliot and eight other members were arrested; three of them were sent to the Tower, and Eliot died there three years later.

### *Personal Rule, 1629-1640*

For the next eleven years King Charles ruled without summoning Parliament. To save money he made peace with France and Spain; to raise sufficient money to govern, royal officials invoked every possible source of revenue short of parliamentary grants. Customs revenues were not sufficient to pay expenses; therefore the King levied fines on individuals who had violated long dormant forest laws, invented new monopolies, and invoked an old statute that required all landholders with an annual income of £40 to be knighted. A large fee was charged if they became knights; a steep fine if they refused.

The levy arousing the greatest opposition was the ship money tax which seacoast towns had paid in earlier centuries to provide ships for defense against a threatened invasion. But England was at peace and Charles demanded the tax of inland as well as coastal counties. John Hampden, a wealthy Puritan, refused to pay his tax, arguing that it usurped Parliament's power to levy taxes. In court the King won the legal verdict, but not the popular one.

### *Royal Advisors*

After the assassination of Buckingham (1628) Charles relied largely on two advisors, Thomas Wentworth (later the Earl of Strafford) and Archbishop Laud. Wentworth was previously a parliamentary leader; he changed sides after the passage of the Petition of Right for personal advantage and because he feared that parliamentary extremism would result

### *Charles and the Scots*

In a breakdown of government. As President of the Council of the North Wentworth imposed law and order on the region so effectively that Charles made him Lord Deputy of Ireland in 1633. His Irish policies were thorough even though his methods for reorganizing finance and stimulating trade were high-handed. Such methods kept Ireland temporarily docile, but he alienated both the "old English" Catholic gentry and the "new English" Puritan immigrants to Ireland during his administration.

In 1633 William Laud became Archbishop of Canterbury and won royal support for religious uniformity in public worship according to High Church (Anglo-Catholic) tradition. Puritans accused him of reverting to Catholicism but Laud, through the Courts of Star Chamber and High Commission, took stern measures against his critics. His measures prompted a Puritan migration to New England and provoked the chain of events that led to civil war in England.

In 1637, when Charles and Laud attempted to force a new prayer book and an Anglican system of church government on Presbyterian Scotland, the Scots rioted and resisted the innovations. A National Covenant was signed which pledged allegiance to Charles but swore to resist to the death all religious changes contrary to their Kirk (Church). Charles determined to invade Scotland but could find neither men nor money to meet the Scottish army that was commanded by Alexander Leslie, and was forced to abandon his campaign. The First Bishops' War (1639) ended in a truce without a battle. Wentworth (now the Earl of Strafford) advised the King to call a Parliament and appeal to English patriotism in order to raise money for fighting the Scots.

The Short Parliament of 1640 assembled in an angry mood and refused to vote funds until it had discussed grievances. Within three weeks Charles dissolved Parliament (therefore the name "short") and made desperate appeals for funds and men to fight a Second Bishops' War; however, he again met with little success. The Scots invaded England with ease and forced Charles to terms which stipulated that they would stay in English territory and receive £850 daily from the King until a settlement was signed. To pay the bill Charles was forced to summon another Parliament in 1640 which turned out to be a Long Parliament.

### *The Expansion of England*

The unsuccessful efforts of the Elizabethans to colonize Virginia did not deter Englishmen from trying again a generation later. The London Company succeeded in establishing Jamestown in 1607 as England's first permanent colony in America. The export of tobacco propped up the colony's meager economy, and in 1619 Virginia set up the first colonial legislature fashioned on the parliamentary model of the mother country. In 1620 a second settlement colony was established in Plymouth, Massachusetts by

Puritan separatists who left the Old World on the *Mayflower* in order to follow freely their religious beliefs in America. Nine years later, under a charter granted by King Charles, the Massachusetts Bay Colony provided a haven for English Puritans to set up their version of a Christian community. This colony prospered and a steady stream of immigrants gave it a population of 14,000 by 1640.

At the same time Ulster (northern Ireland) was colonized by Scottish and English settlers. By 1609 the English Crown had seized all six counties of modern Ulster from Irish lords and chieftains. The land was divided into parcels and leased to English and Scottish immigrants. By 1629 there were 13,000 English and Scottish families in Ulster, cultivating the best of the land and sowing the seeds of the religious and political tension that has found no solution to this day.

**C**harles's call to arms in an effort to prove he was King would be fatal to his system of personal government. His makeshift absolutism had alienated the House of Commons, the Puritans, and his native Scotland.

Unlike his European counterparts, he lacked both a trained and paid bureaucracy and a standing army. English monarchs depended upon the loyalty of unpaid local officials. By the time the Long Parliament was summoned in 1640 there was already a willingness on the part of these gentry to disobey the King and his law, as witnessed in John Hampden's ship money case. Archbishop Laud's heavy-handed High Church policies spurred English Puritans and Scottish Presbyterians to follow their religious conscience rather than obey their King. War and political revolution was the outcome.

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10

**Civil War and Interregnum:  
1642-1660**

- 1640 Long Parliament holds its first session
- 1641 King Charles's councilors, Thomas Wentworth and Archbishop Laud, are sentenced to death by Parliament
- 1642 Charles raises his royal standard at Nottingham: the Civil War begins
- 1645 Parliament's New Model Army decisively defeats the Royalists at the Battle of Naseby
- 1648 Charles and a Scottish army invade England to precipitate the Second Civil War
- 1649 Execution of Charles I by order of a rump House of Commons
- 1649-1660 Interregnum: the Commonwealth and Protectorate
- 1651 *Leviathan*, a defense of absolute monarchy, written by Sir Thomas Hobbes
- 1653 The Instrument of Government drawn up by the army ends the Commonwealth and establishes Cromwell as Lord Protector
- 1658 Death of Cromwell; his son, Richard, becomes Lord Protector
- 1660 Convention Parliament restores monarchy by recalling Charles II from exile

**T**he Long Parliament provided the stage for a renewed confrontation between the King and Parliament, as the House of Commons claimed for itself additional royal prerogatives and sought a transfer of political



power from the King to Parliament. The ensuing two Civil Wars began largely as a struggle for supremacy between the King and the parliamentary gentry, but ended with the army as victor and Oliver Cromwell as the commanding figure.

Cromwell's republican experiments were serious attempts to find a satisfactory, constitutional substitute for the monarchy; however, each alternative failed. Since military rule was not an acceptable long-term substitute for the monarchy, the Stuart dynasty returned upon Cromwell's death. From this English revolution in government sprang two political ideals that profoundly affected English society in the following centuries: the importance of individual liberty and the merits of representative government.

## STEPS TO CIVIL WAR

The Long Parliament was in general agreement in its efforts to curb the King's royal prerogatives and abuse of power by parliamentary legislation. There was little thought of revolution or deposing the King. However, John Pym and his radical colleagues sought more; the transfer of sovereignty to Parliament. Pym steered the radical wing of the House of Commons toward divisive religious issues and an attempt to control the army. Instead of capitalizing on this danger to gain supporters, Charles I, with his genius for miscalculation, forced the issue by sending armed men into the House of Commons to arrest his opponents, thereby coalescing the opposition against him.

## Parliamentary Triumphs

Under Pym's leadership the Long Parliament accomplished a mild constitutional revolution in its first two years. But when revolutionary changes were also demanded in the Church and in the control of the militia, the positions of the royalists and of the radicals became irreconcilable. Most of the constructive work of this Parliament was accomplished in its early months and included: (1) the abolition of such prerogative courts as the Star Chamber and the High Commission; (2) no dissolution of Parliament without its consent; (3) the Triennial Act demanding that Parliament meet at least every three years; and (4) no type of taxation without parliamentary consent.

Parliament attempted to punish the Earl of Strafford (Thomas Wentworth) for his administration of royal policies of the previous decade. When the impeachment proceedings failed to convict, the Commons resorted to a bill of attainder which needed neither legal proof nor a trial, but still required the King's consent. Charles had promised to protect his

## Parliamentary Division

chief advisor, but mob and parliamentary pressures intimidated him into signing the death warrant, and in May 1641, Strafford was executed. Archbishop Laud was also imprisoned and later (1645) executed.

The proposal of the Puritans to abolish bishops (the "Root and Branch" bill) and radically reform the Church alienated a considerable number of Parliamentarians who had previously backed political bills. In the summer of 1641 the division was widened by the news of a far-reaching rebellion in Ireland and the massacre of English and Scottish settlers in Ulster. Parliament wished to crush the rebellion by sending over an army, but did not want to place a large force under the control of the King for fear that he might use it to enforce his authority in England. Therefore, the radical members drew up a resolution, the Grand Remonstrance, in which they stated their grievances and demanded parliamentary approval of both the King's advisors and the army officers. After a stormy debate the bill passed the Commons by only eleven votes, which was evidence that the conservative members were opposed to any sweeping changes in the traditional political arrangement.

## ATTACK ON THE COMMONS

Instead of waiting and winning over a few more members, Charles committed a political error by marching into the House of Commons with an armed guard to arrest five of its leading members; however, the members had been forewarned and had fled. Soon after this abortive coup, Charles rode north to raise an army and to show by force that he was King. His subjects gradually took sides and prepared for war. In June 1642, Parliament sent the King an ultimatum (the Nineteen Propositions) requiring that he surrender virtually all his remaining prerogative powers. Such preposterous demands indicated that any hope of compromise was past, and in August civil war began.

## COURSE OF THE WAR

At first the Royalists were victorious because of the quality of their cavalry and leadership. But time favored Parliament because of its control of the richer and more populous areas of the country, superior number of troops, and the backing of the navy. By 1646 Parliament was victorious, even though Charles was not willing to recognize the fact. The King's dealings with the Scots brought on a short second Civil War that Cromwell's forces won easily, and that left the army in control of the country. The army promptly purged Parliament of some 140 members it disliked. The resulting Rump Parliament that remained constituted a court to try the King for

treason. This illegal court convicted Charles and had him executed. The King was dead; Cromwell and the army were the new rulers.

Choosing Sides

Geographically, the King's supporters (Royalists or Cavaliers) centered in the less populous north and west. His party included most of the nobility, many of the gentry, Roman Catholics, and the Church of England. Lacking sources of revenue, Charles called upon the loyalty of his peers and gentry to provide him with money and services. And in his two nephews, Prince Rupert and Prince Maurice, Charles found competent military leaders.

Although the lines of demarcation were never sharp between the two sides, Parliament's supporters (named Roundheads) drew their major strength from the south and east of the country. Support also came from the navy, merchants, yeoman farmers, the City of London, and opponents of High Anglicanism. Parliament had greater financial resources at its disposal for fighting a war, but its commander-in-chief, the Earl of Essex, lacked generalship and a plan of attack. Not until Thomas Fairfax and Oliver Cromwell took over command and could parliamentary leadership rival that of its opponents.

Civil War,

1642-1646

The Royalist superiority in cavalry gave Charles the edge in the campaigns of the first two years. Parliament then negotiated with Scotland and signed the Solemn League and Covenant (1643) in which Parliament agreed to establish the Reformed (Presbyterian) Church in England in return for the assistance of the Scottish army. At Marston Moor (near York) in 1644 the combined Parliamentary and Scottish armies won their first important battle, but were unable to follow up their victory. In the next year, with the help of the Self-Denying Ordinance which forced the resignation of members of Parliament holding military commands (including their inept generals), Parliament reorganized the army and made Sir Thomas Fairfax the new commander. Drawing heavily on Oliver Cromwell's disciplined and dedicated troops, a New Model Army was created which decisively defeated the Royalists at the Battle of Naseby (1645). Thereafter, the King's position was hopeless and the following year he surrendered to the Scots. By the end of 1646 the first Civil War ended when the Scots agreed to surrender Charles to Parliament and go home.

The Disputed Peace

Parliament had triumphed over the King; however, Parliament did not represent the views of Cromwell's army and the army was now the real power in the land. Defeating the King was easier than creating a government acceptable to all parties. Factions appeared in Parliament and in the army, as the victors quarreled among themselves and attempted to negotiate separately with the King. Charles responded by trying to play off Parliament, the army, and the Scots against one another. He made conflicting promises

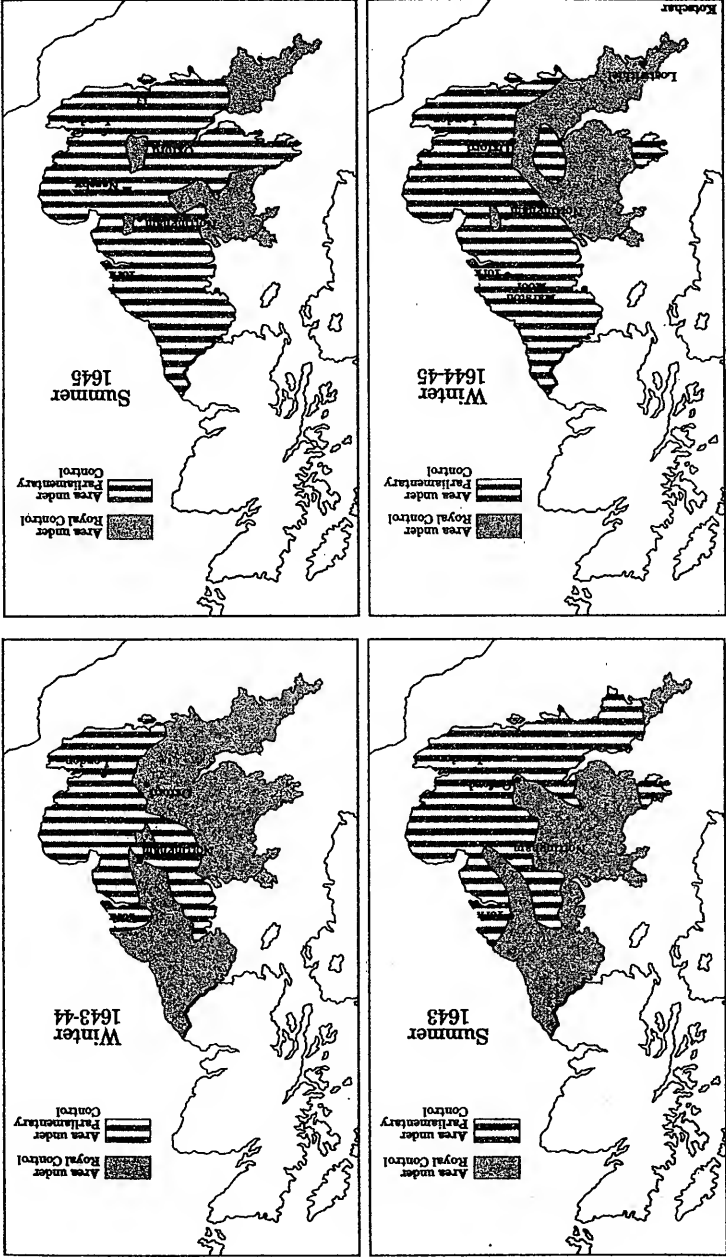


Fig. 10.1 The Civil War

to each group so that in the end his scheming made all the parties suspicious of his integrity. No party, at first, had any intention of deposing the King, and the argument revolved around religious controversy. The Presbyterian members of Parliament wanted to impose the National Covenant on England, but the sectarians in Parliament and in the army opposed a Presbyterian establishment. When Parliament ordered the New Model Army either to disband without back pay or to go to Ireland under Presbyterian officers, the army threatened mutiny.

In the summer of 1647, Oliver Cromwell, who had served as the mediator for the various parties, threw in his lot with the army. Cromwell and his followers proceeded to draft the Heads of the Proposals as a compromise measure to save the nation from both royal absolutism and the democratic republican proposals advocated by the Levellers (the followers of John Lilburne) and other radicals in the army. Cromwell's moderate proposal was ignored by both Parliament and the King. Charles escaped from his army captors to the Isle of Wight where he negotiated with the Scots to invade England and restore him to the throne in return for his support of a Presbyterian Church settlement.

### *The Second Civil War, 1648*

The Scottish invasion of 1648 precipitated the second Civil War. General Fairfax crushed Royalist uprisings in the south of England while Cromwell's veterans moved north to rout a superior Scottish-Royalist army near Preston. After Preston the army dominated the situation and vented its wrath on both Parliament and Charles. The soldiers were convinced that Charles was a "man of blood" for breaking his word and reviving the war, and that Parliament was little better because of its efforts to negotiate with such a king even after the second war broke out. In December of 1648 the army council directed Colonel Pride to purge Parliament of its Presbyterian supporters. The remaining members—the Rump Parliament—took orders from the army.

### RECIDE

The purged House of Commons, consisting of less than one hundred members, appointed a court of commissioners to try the King for treason. Charles never accepted the legality of this tribunal and refused to speak in his own defense. The verdict was never in doubt, for the army had decided upon the execution of the King. In January 1649, Charles met his death with calmness and dignity.

## THE COMMONWEALTH AND THE PROTECTORATE, 1649-1660

The execution of the King transformed England into a republic which few in England had foreseen or actually desired. The government now rested on the power of the army and its rather reluctant hero, Oliver Cromwell. In the ensuing interregnum Cromwell experimented with various alternatives to monarchy, but each attempt foundered over the incompatibility of a constitutional government and the "rule of the saints" who considered themselves God's elect, but were not politically elected by the nation. Cromwell's leadership saved England from the grim prospects of either anarchy or tyranny. He achieved prosperity and order in the country and won respect abroad by a vigorous and successful foreign policy but failed to find a satisfactory alternative to monarchy. Cromwell's death brought increasing civilian discontent and the restoration of the Stuarts.

### *Cromwell and the New Government*

The Rump Parliament passed an act which abolished the monarchy and the House of Lords and set up a Council of State of forty-one members to administer the realm. For the next four years this Council served as the nominal executive, but real, if somewhat disguised, power was in the hands of Cromwell. Only Cromwell's statesmanship and self-restraint kept him from abusing his almost unlimited authority, because the constitutional checks demanded by earlier Parliaments of the Stuarts were never applied to him. He was devoutly religious and confident that God was on his side; yet, he was neither intolerant of other faiths nor a "puritan in the narrow sense." Unlike many Puritans, he enjoyed the pleasures of life, including music and dancing. Led on by the force of circumstances more than by personal ambition, Cromwell successfully met internal and external challenges to the government.

### THE RADICAL OPPOSITION

Cromwell's government was opposed not only by royalists but also by radicals within the army. The war had undermined the previous religious and social order, and zealous pamphleteers played upon the feelings of the disenchanted. Some of the independents in the army were seeking to legalize religious pluralism; others went further in their demands. John Lilburne and his Levellers advocated a democratic republic, whereas Gerrard Winstanley and his fellow Diggers aimed at an agrarian communism that would abolish all manors and landlords. But in political and social viewpoints Cromwell and his middle-of-the-road party were not innovators. Thus, when choosing members of the Council of State, they excluded radicals. Both Fairfax and Cromwell acted decisively to smother further revolutionary threats and

minor mutinies in the army. Lilburne was imprisoned, and a few executions took place. Cromwell turned next to foreign threats.

### Foreign Affairs

Cromwell's active foreign policy brought together Ireland, Scotland, and England under a single government and made England respected in Europe as a powerful naval and commercial power. "Cromwell and Blake, rather than Queen Elizabeth and Drake, really made England mistress of the seas.

### IRELAND

Royalists and Catholics had joined forces under the Marquis of Ormonde in support of Charles II, son of the executed King, and were attempting to gain control of all of Ireland. In August 1649, Cromwell and his troops landed in Ireland, relieved Dublin, and within ten months had crushed the rebellion. Cromwell's massacre of the defenders in Drogheda for refusing to surrender was an object lesson to other cities, but was also a blight on his reputation. The land settlement that followed produced additional Irish resentment against Cromwell. About two-thirds of the land south of Ulster was confiscated and given to English Protestants who soon built up extensive estates. For the next two and a half centuries the hostility between the English-Protestant (and often absentee) landlords and the Irish tenants remained unresolved.

### SCOTLAND

From Ireland Cromwell returned to England to lead another army (1650) against the Scotch Covenanters who were supporting Charles Stuart's second attempt to gain the throne. Cromwell's efforts for a peaceful negotiation failed, and the superior forces of the Scots hemmed in his army at Dunbar. But his troops won a decisive victory, taking ten thousand prisoners. During the winter Charles was crowned King at Scone and in the spring a new Scottish army moved into England—and into the trap Cromwell had planned. The royal army was surrounded and decimated at Worcester. Charles escaped and fled to the Continent. The Battle of Worcester ended the Civil War and united Ireland, Scotland, and England under one Commonwealth government.

\* Robert Eckles and Richard Hale, *Britain, Her Peoples and the Commonwealth* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1954), p. 152.

### THE WAR WITH THE DUTCH, 1652-1654

Triumphant over British opposition, Cromwell next faced Holland which was England's chief commercial and naval rival. The Republican navy under Robert Blake had won respect by forcing the rebellious Virginian and West Indian colonies to acknowledge the Commonwealth, and by routing Prince Rupert's fleet. In 1651 Parliament passed the Navigation Act which favored England's commercial class by restricting the maritime trade of the Dutch. The act, which reflected the economic rivalry of the period, decreed that trade with England and her colonies could be carried only in English ships or in ships of the producing country, and that all goods from the colonies must be in English ships. Other causes that contributed to the outbreak of hostilities with Holland included: (1) disputes over fishing rights off the coast of England; (2) the harboring of royalist supporters of the son of Charles I by the Dutch; and (3) the refusal of Dutch ships to dip their flags in respect to English warships in the Channel. Although indecisive sea battles followed, Dutch shipping interests were so badly hurt that peace was made in 1654 on terms favorable to the English. Treaties were also concluded with Sweden, Denmark, and Portugal that benefited English commerce.

### SPANISH POLICY

Cromwell also shared the Elizabethan and Puritan sentiment that Spain was more dangerous to England than France. Admiral Robert Blake's expedition to the Mediterranean (1654-1657) was so impressive that England became the dominant naval power in the Mediterranean for the first time. The attack on Spain in the West Indies was only partially successful. Jamaica was taken, but the attempt to seize Santo Domingo failed. The harassment of Spanish possessions led to all-out war with Spain and an alliance between England and France. In the Anglo-French land campaign against Spain in the Spanish Netherlands, the English troops won the Battle of the Dunes and received Dunkirk from Louis XIV for their aid.

### Constitutional Experiments

Although successful abroad, Cromwell failed to find a satisfactory constitutional basis for his government. All efforts founded over the issue of sovereignty between the rule of the elect—the army leadership—and the elected—the various Parliaments. The execution of the King and the dissolution of Parliament by force left no shred of legality for the government during the interregnum. Yet Cromwell had no wish to become either a king or for the army to have governmental power.

### The

### Commonwealth

For four years (1649-1653) Cromwell attempted to negotiate the differences between the Rump Parliament and the army since he was the pivotal figure in each. Dissatisfaction with the Parliament grew in the army and in



the nation. The Rump Parliament was charged with corruption and appeared to be interested primarily in its own tenure in office when it refused to hold a general election.

In April 1653, Cromwell forcibly dissolved the Rump Parliament and replaced it with a nominated "Parliament of Saints." This body was hand-picked by Cromwell's Council from candidates supplied by the independent churches. This assembly was nicknamed the Barebones Parliament after the name of one of its members, an Anabaptist preacher named Praise-God Barebones. Its members were zealous but amateurish. When its views on religion became too radical for moderates among the army officers, the Assembly was dissolved, and the Commonwealth came to an end in December, 1653.

### *The Instrument of Government, 1653*

The outcome was a new constitution drawn up by army officers to replace the Commonwealth. The Instrument provided for an executive (Cromwell) who was to be the Lord Protector. A Council of State would advise the Protector and share control of the army with him. A one-house Parliament would be elected every three years by an enlarged franchise representing England, Scotland, and Ireland. Toleration was granted to Christians who were not Anglicans or Roman Catholics. Checks and balances were included to prevent the tyranny of either Protector or Parliament. The first Protectorate Parliament met in 1654 and immediately attempted to amend the Instrument to its advantage. One hundred members were dismissed for refusing to accept Cromwell's four constitutional "fundamentals," but when the remainder continued to wrangle, Cromwell dissolved Parliament in January 1655.

### MILITARY RULE

As a temporary expedient England and Wales were divided into eleven military districts with a major general placed over each. The people disliked the military arrangement, and war with Spain created the need for increased subsidies. Therefore, in 1656 a second Parliament convened which was carefully chosen by the army officers and screened by the Council of State. Even this select group asserted its independence from the army and could not be effectively controlled. One of its first acts was to discontinue the rule of the major generals and to propose a new constitution.

### HUMBLE PETITION AND ADVICE

Leaders in Parliament, wishing to return to a more traditional system of government, next proposed that Cromwell should become king, that a second chamber, called the "other house," should be filled with the king's appointees, and that the powers of Parliament should be increased. Cromwell declined the crown because acceptance would have violated the whole

republican argument. But he accepted the other features of the constitution and the new Parliament met in January 1658. Almost immediately the House of Commons demanded control over both Cromwell and the Upper House, instead of paying attention to the war with Spain. Once again, Cromwell dissolved Parliament, but before he could assemble another one, he died in 1658.

### *Fall of the Protectorate*

Cromwell's death also doomed the protectorate, because only the force of Cromwell's personality and the loyalty of the army to its commander-in-chief had held the government together. Oliver's son and successor, Richard, lacked prestige and ability to keep the support of the sectarians, the army, and the Puritans. Besides, the nation was weary of Puritan and army control and was ready for the return of traditional government—a king and Parliament. Army commanders, led by Charles Fleetwood and John Lambert, defied Richard and grasped for power, while royalist and republican uprisings also took place. Richard surrendered to the army which promptly replaced the protectorate government with the earlier (Rump) Parliament. However, this Parliament got along with the army no better than in earlier years and was dismissed in October. Finally General George Monck, commander of the army in Scotland, marched south to support civilian rule and oppose General Lambert. In London he recalled the Long Parliament of 1640 and had it dissolve itself in favor of a freely elected Convention Parliament. In 1660 this Convention Parliament invited Charles II, son of Charles I, to return to England from exile. The experiment of an English government without a king had lasted eleven years.

### *Achievements of the Interregnum*

The accomplishments of the interregnum were largely the triumphs of Cromwell since he was the leader responsible for preserving order and individual liberty. His foreign policy brought security through strength. Religious pluralism and free thought were saved from the extremism of sectarians and the uniformity demanded by Anglicans and Presbyterians. The Jews were allowed to return to England after an exile of 350 years; civil marriages were legalized; public schools and universities were reformed. The two decades between 1640 and 1660 also produced economic change. The capitalist classes, in agriculture, commerce and industry, freed themselves from the control over economic life that the Crown had formerly exercised. Landed classes were freed from feudal tenure, agricultural productivity jumped as landowners were free to drain marshes and enclose land, while in industry monopolies came to an end and the government no longer attempted to regulate prices or wages.



## THE PURITAN DILEMMA

Although Cromwell represented the loftiest ideals of Puritanism and frowned upon the "blue laws" that his compatriots favored, he had no doubts about the rightness or moral superiority of the Puritan position. He was convinced that he and his supporters were God's agents to save England from the forces of tyranny, whether foreign, royalist, or religious. This conviction made it impossible to resolve the constitutional conflict in the rivalry between the politically elected and the religiously elect. Thus the Puritan position created its own dialectic or contradictions, for although it stressed individualism, it also claimed the guardianship of the saints over the sinners. By 1660 England was weary of this guardianship and ready to return to the old ways, perhaps because "the sinners were more numerous than the saints."

Earlier views of these two decades often made "the early Stuarts too evil and the parliamentary leaders too virtuous." Perhaps closer to the truth is to see James and Charles as conservative monarchs with few political skills defending the status quo economically, politically, and religiously against the aggressive challenge of the House of Commons and the Puritans who wished to extend their influence and authority.

Puritanism and the mythology of the common law—protecting the liberty of individuals and the inviolability of property—were two ideologies that motivated revolt. However, it turned out to be easier for Parliament to revolt successfully than to rule a kingdom without a king.

By 1660 nostalgia for the old order brought back the Stuarts, but neither the monarchy nor Parliament would be the same as before the Civil Wars. And certainly the ferment of ideas, from the Levellers' demand for democracy, to John Milton's plea for freedom of the press, to the merchants' push for freedom of enterprise, to the religious ferment of the Puritans and Independents, meant that England could never fully turn back the clock in the Restoration of 1660.

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The Restoration of 1660 was a rejection of the Puritans' constitutional experiments. The monarchy, Parliament, and the Anglican supremacy were restored, but not simply as a replica of the days of Charles I. The King had lost power; Parliament had increased its influence. Charles II accomplished what his brother, James I, could not. As a result James lost the throne in the revolution of 1688. The revolutionary settlement transferred ultimate sovereignty from the King to Parliament and replaced a Catholic monarch with the Protestants, William and Mary. The new co-monarchs were rulers, not by divine right or by strict heredity, but by an act of Parliament. Both Charles and James had gained financial advantage by aligning England's foreign policy with the interest of Louis XIV and France. In contrast, King William marshaled English resources and led a European coalition against France to halt Louis XIV at the zenith of his power.

## CHARLES AND THE RESTORATION

Charles II learned from the execution of his father some of the risks involved when Parliament and king became hostile rivals and distrusted each other. Therefore, the Restoration brought unusual harmony between monarchy and Parliament until Charles's religious and foreign policies produced such opposition that he resigned his last years without Parliament in order to control the succession to the throne.

### The Return of Charles

To allay the reservations of English subjects who had reasons to fear the restoration of the monarchy, Charles issued the Declaration of Breda from Holland in which he promised to grant a general pardon to all political opponents except to those designated by Parliament; to permit as much religious toleration as Parliament would allow; and to let Parliament determine the legitimacy of property titles acquired during the interregnum. The Convention Parliament was satisfied with the Declaration, and in May 1660, Charles returned to London from exile. But the Restoration did not restore all the powers of earlier kings, for the acts of 1640-1641 to which Charles I had given assent (e.g. prerogative courts, unparliamentary taxation, and the arbitrary arrest of members of Parliament without cause) remained illegal. Before its dissolution in 1661 the Convention Parliament, sympathetic to Charles's proclamation of clemency, carried out a relatively moderate policy toward former supporters of the Commonwealth. Troops were paid and dismissed, except for a standing army of five thousand soldiers, and only thirteen leading officials of the Cromwellian period were put to death.

- 1660 Restoration of the monarchy and the Church of England
- 1661-1665 Parliamentary acts, known as the Clarendon Code, effectively enforce Anglican supremacy
- 1665 New Amsterdam (New York) seized from Holland in Second Dutch War
- Great Fire of London
- 1667 John Milton writes epic poem *Paradise Lost*
- 1673 Passage of anti-Catholic Test Act requiring all officeholders to take the Anglican sacraments and deny transubstantiation
- 1685 James II, the last Catholic King, succeeds his brother on the throne
- 1687 Publication of Sir Isaac Newton's *Principia*
- 1688 Successful, bloodless Protestant overthrow of James II, known as the Glorious Revolution
- 1689 Bill of Rights sets forth parliamentary conditions for recognizing William and Mary as rulers
- 1690 King William and Protestants rout James II and Catholics at the Battle of the Boyne in Ireland
- John Locke publishes *Two Treatises on Government* proposing a social contract between the governor and the governed
- 1701 Act of Settlement assures a Protestant succession after the death of King William

## Restoration and Revolution: 1660-1702

**The New King**

Charles II held few principles of any kind. He cared little about national policies and seemed to live only for pleasure and the pursuit of his many mistresses. Yet he was witty and possessed keen intelligence. When circumstances demanded a display of power, Charles could exert his latent ability and carry on important negotiations successfully. Clever, charming, selfish, and completely cynical, Charles mocked the morals and fears (Catholicism and Louis XIV) of England and held on to his throne and the powers of the monarchy, even though he wasted his authority in the pursuit of pro-French and pro-Catholic policies. When threatened by political opposition, or when the succession to the throne was challenged, the King would display his masterly abilities. Ordinary duties bored him, however, and he preferred to devote himself to more pleasant courtly pastimes; but he remembered well his father's fate and was never lazy to the point of letting affairs of state get out of hand.

**The Religious Settlement**

The parliamentary election of 1661 brought hundreds of enthusiastic royalists and Anglicans into the House of Commons. The resultant "Cavalier Parliament" proceeded to penalize Puritans and Dissenters, as well as Roman Catholics, by a series of four acts known as the Clarendon Code (after Charles's chief minister, Edward Hyde, earl of Clarendon): (1) The Municipal Corporations Act excluded from municipal office all who refused to renounce the 1643 Solemn League and Covenant establishing the Presbyterian Church in England, or who refused to swear allegiance to the King. (2) The Act of Uniformity required all clergy to use the revised Book of Common Prayer in their services. One-fifth of all clergy refused and a significant Dissenting religious community was born. These faced further restrictions. (3) The Conventicle Act imposed harsh penalties for attending a religious service (conventicle) which did not conform to the Anglican liturgy. (4) The Five Mile Act forbade these nonconforming ministers to visit or live within five miles of any town where they had previously preached. These acts clearly restored Anglican supremacy. More than ever, Anglicanism, as the established church of the country, became the religion of the landed classes. At the same time this pressure to conform, after the religious pluralism of the interregnum, created modern nonconformity in England because many clergy and laymen no longer found in the Anglican Church the religious latitude which had existed in the Elizabethan Church. Thousands of Nonconformists in England and Scotland went into hiding or were imprisoned. One Nonconformist, John Bunyan, wrote part of *The Pilgrim's Progress* while imprisoned in Bedford jail for his dissenting views.

**Foreign Affairs**

The foreign policy of Charles II was motivated by personal rather than national interests. The independent strength and stature of England in European affairs under Cromwell soon shifted under Charles to one of subservience to French interests in return for the secret payment of money to Charles by Louis XIV. European politics in the last half of the seventeenth century centered upon the decay of Spain and its empire and the expansionism and influence of Louis XIV of France.

**THE MARRIAGE OF CHARLES**

In 1662 Charles made an unpopular but profitable marriage alliance with Catherine of Braganza, daughter of the King of Portugal. The marriage brought him a rich dowry which included the ports of Tangier in North Africa and Bombay in India; the treaty also aligned England with France against Spain. In the same year Charles sold Dunkirk to France in spite of the opposition of his subjects.

**IRELAND**

Irish Catholics and royalists had supported Charles during the interregnum and welcomed the Restoration. In return for their loyalty Charles restored to the Irish some of the land that had been confiscated by Cromwell's government, but this action antagonized his relations with English landlords in Ireland. Moreover, the English Parliament continued its traditional anti-Irish policies by excluding Irish ships from colonial trade and by making illegal the shipment of cattle from Ireland to England.

**THE DUTCH WARS**

The continuing commercial rivalry between Holland and England led to the Second Dutch War (1665-1667) and the seizure of New Amsterdam in America, which was renamed New York. After the peace treaty Charles asserted a temporary independence from Louis XIV by signing the Triple Alliance (1668) which united England, Holland, and Sweden against the expansionist designs of France. But Louis used bribery to persuade Charles to break this alliance and to attack Holland again. Charles dragged England into the Third Dutch War (1672-1674) which Parliament finally halted by refusing to grant additional funds. The strain of naval warfare against England, combined with the land war against France, weakened the resources of the Dutch and contributed to their decline as a major colonial and naval power.

**CHARLES AND LOUIS XIV**

Charles admired the glittering court, the Roman Catholicism, and the unlimited royal power of Louis XIV and instead of opposing France—in line with the balance of power principle—he became an agent of Louis's

scheme of expansion. In 1670 Charles secretly signed the Treaty of Dover, whereby he promised to break away from the Triple Alliance, to attack Holland, and to convert to Catholicism as soon as expedient. For this alliance Louis provided Charles with substantial sums of money. Charles kept his promise of declaring war on Holland, but his efforts to relieve the restrictions on English Catholics provoked instead a strong parliamentary protest.

The King and Parliament cooperated on most matters until growing suspicions of Charles's French and Catholic sympathies resulted in legislative efforts to increase restrictions on English Catholics. In particular, Parliament wished to keep James, the Catholic brother of Charles, from succeeding to the throne since Charles had no legitimate children. To save the Stuart succession, Charles acted forcefully to destroy the political opposition and ended up ruling without Parliament. Louis XIV helped make this possible by granting additional money to Charles.

### Political Developments

#### FALL OF CLARENDON

Lord Clarendon made many enemies during his years as chief minister (1661–1667). He distrusted the House of Commons, censored the immoral activities of the royal court, and was identified (unfairly) in the minds of Puritans with the harsh Clarendon Code. The unpopular foreign policy, including the King's marriage, the sale of Dunkirk, and the war with Holland, increased his unpopularity. Finally, when the Dutch fleet humiliated the English by sailing up the Thames in 1667 and burning English war ships anchored at Chatham, the King abandoned Clarendon to his enemies. He was dismissed and impeached, then fled to the Continent where he wrote his *History of the Rebellion*.

#### THE CABAL, 1667–1673

Instead of replacing Clarendon with another chief minister, Charles chose to direct affairs himself, relying on five unofficial advisors who, for various reasons, favored the efforts of the King to relax the Anglican supremacy. Two were Catholics, Clifford and Arlington; another, Buckingham, was a skeptic and Charles's favorite. Ashley Cooper, later Earl of Shaftesbury, was a latitudinarian (broad and liberal) in religion and an able essayist; and the Earl of Lauderdale was formerly Presbyterian. The cabal of advisors (so-called because their initials spelled "cabal") broke up in 1673 when opposition to Charles's Declaration of Indulgence for non-Anglicans triggered the passage of anti-Catholic legislation and bitterness between King and Parliament. Three members left the cabal, and Shaftesbury, convinced he was deceived by the King, became the leading critic of the King's policies.

### The Rise of Political Parties

The reaction of the fiercely anti-Catholic Parliament to Charles's Declaration of Indulgence was the passage of the Test Act (1673) which required all officeholders, civil and military, to take the Anglican sacrament and to deny transubstantiation (the change during the eucharist or communion from the bread and wine to the substance of the body and blood of Christ). By 1674 the friendly Cavalier Parliament had been transformed into a hostile critic of Charles's pro-French, propagandist policy. The King dropped his scheme for Catholicizing England and tried to court Parliament by making the Earl of Danby his chief minister and the platform of royalty and Anglicanism the rallying point for his supporters.

**Tory and Whig Party Origins.** The "court party" which emerged under Danby won the epithet Tory (a term for Irish cattle thieves) from opposing groups. Rival factions who gravitated toward Shaftesbury and his anti-Tory "country party" were later to be called Whigs (as political heirs of the Puritan opposition to Charles I, although the term refers to Scottish robbers who murdered their victims). Their supporters came largely from the city merchants and several powerful aristocratic families who favored limitations on royal power, toleration of Protestant dissenters, and who were militantly anti-Catholic.

#### THE POPISH PLOT, 1678

The factions opposed to Charles were aided by the false tales of an unpunctured informer, Titus Oates, who inflamed the populace to hysteria by describing a Jesuit plot to murder Charles, massacre Protestants, and set up, with the help of the French, a Catholic government under James, duke of York. A shocked and angry Parliament, led by Shaftesbury, impeached and executed several Catholics and began to impeach Danby when the secret dealings of Charles and Danby with Louis XIV were revealed. To save Danby and his own family from attack, Charles dissolved the Cavalier Parliament.

#### THE PARLIAMENTS OF 1679–1681

Charles's second Parliament convened in 1679 with an anti-Catholic Whig majority dedicated to excluding James from succession to the throne. Charles blocked the exclusion bill by dissolving Parliament, but not before it had passed the Habeas Corpus Amendment Act which prevented arbitrary imprisonment and insured a speedy trial. A third Parliament met in 1680 and the House of Commons immediately passed an Exclusion Bill that made Charles's illegitimate son, James Scott, the duke of Monmouth, heir to the throne instead of James; but the House of Lords rejected it. A fourth Parliament which was summoned to Oxford in 1681 to avoid the influence of the London mob was dissolved within a week. Charles ruled his remaining years without Parliament.



## PERSONAL RULE OF CHARLES II, 1681-1685

Once again Charles was receiving subsidies from Louis XIV and no longer needed Parliamentary grants. His last four years were a time of personal and autocratic rule during which he struck hard at the Whig opposition. Shaftesbury fled to the Continent and died in Holland. Other Whig leaders were fraudulently charged with plotting the King's death, and Lords Russell and Sydney were executed. Whig boroughs lost their charters and Tory town governments and sheriffs replaced the influence of such Whig organizations as the Green Ribbon clubs. When Charles died in 1685, the Whig opposition was scattered, the English monarch was a willing pensionary of France, and the succession had been preserved for the legitimate heir, James.

## Restoration Society

Reaction to Puritan morality was observed most noticeably in Charles's court where a studied effort was made to imitate the lively and lavish court of Louis XIV. Wit, worldly charm, and love affairs were the stepping-stones of success in many a political career. But society at Whitehall never represented England. The nation which was still largely agricultural in its economy and provincial in its outlook, was often suspicious of commercial and social life in London. Furthermore, the capital suffered two disasters: the plague of 1665 which took 70,000 lives in London alone; and the Great Fire in 1666 which destroyed over 13,000 buildings and gave the architect Sir Christopher Wren a magnificent opportunity to rebuild the city.

## THE LAST CATHOLIC KING

James II succeeded to the throne with a minimum of dissension, because the nation expected only a mild Catholic interim until his Protestant daughters, Mary and Anne, came to the throne. James pushed to the extreme his royal prerogative of suspending laws. When his son and heir to the throne was born, who would most assuredly be reared Catholic, leading Englishmen invited William of Orange, husband of James's daughter Mary, to lead a revolt against the King. The coup, which turned out to be bloodless and successful, settled the constitutional issue of the century: the sovereignty of Parliament triumphed over the divine and hereditary right of kings.

With the Anglican Church preaching the Biblical doctrine of nonresistance, the Whig opposition dead or scattered, and the recent civil war still a vivid memory, there was little serious opposition to James's accession as long as the King promised to uphold the established church and to keep his religion private. James was serious-minded, honest, and devoutly Catholic.

## Accession to the Throne

## Foreign Policy

**JAMES AND CATHOLICISM**

With the Whigs in disarray, a cooperative Tory Parliament was elected in 1685 that was willing to grant money to James provided there were no religious changes. However, when James asked for a standing army commanded by Roman Catholic officers, Parliament became suspicious and reduced the King's subsidies. Angered by their criticisms, James adjourned Parliament and never called another.

Undeterred by the warnings of his political advisors or the religious sensibilities of his subjects, King James proceeded to restore privileges to Roman Catholics. He encamped an army near London commanded by Catholic officers; appointed an ecclesiastical commission, headed by the notorious Justice Jeffreys, to silence or dismiss his Anglican critics; appointed Catholics to official positions in universities and in the royal administration; and issued two Declarations of Indulgences (1687, 1688) which would permit free public worship for Roman Catholics and Protestant Nonconformists. When seven bishops, including the Archbishop of Canterbury, petitioned that the Declaration be withdrawn, James had them arrested on a charge of seditious libel. Their trial became a popular cause, and crowds cheered the bishops when the jury acquitted them.

## PROTESTANT REBELLIONS

The Duke of Monmouth, an illegitimate son of Charles II, landed in southern England in a reckless effort to win the throne, but only a few thousand peasants and tradesmen joined his ill-starred venture. Royal troops under John Churchill, crushed the rebels at Sedgemoor. Monmouth was executed, and the "Bloody Assizes" under Lord Chief Justice Jeffreys inflicted brutal vengeance on hundreds of Monmouth's followers. In Scotland a Protestant rebellion was led by the Earl of Argyll; however, his little army of Covenanters was dispersed and Argyll was executed.

but he was also arrogant and obstinate and, unlike his brother, insensitive to the political and religious facts of English life. His one overriding goal, like that of Mary Tudor, was the restore Catholicism to England.

King James, like Charles II, aligned his foreign policy with the interest of France which, at this time, was encroaching on neighboring countries. This threat produced a defensive coalition (the League of Augsburg) of Protestant and Catholic states which included Holland, Brandenburg, several south German states, and the Hapsburg Emperor. Even Pope Innocent XI did not endorse the Catholicizing efforts of Louis XIV on the rest of the Continent. When James persisted in his support of these efforts, William of Orange intervened in English affairs on the grounds that his wife was rightful heir to the throne of England, that he needed English backing



to fight King Louis XIV, and that influential Englishmen would back him if he invaded England.

### *The Glorious Revolution, 1688*

With the birth of King James's son in the summer of 1688, the expectation of an interim Catholic monarchy was shattered, since the Crown Prince became heir presumptive in place of his Protestant half-sister, Mary. The prospects of a Catholic dynasty and the exclusion of Mary from the throne dismayed many Englishmen, and in July seven influential Whig and Tory leaders invited William of Orange to lead an English uprising to prevent King James from consolidating his movement toward absolutism and Catholicism. Although the English were slow in rallying around William's forces, they did not oppose his advance. Since the revolution was successful, bloodless, and supported by the respectable members of society, the label "Glorious" was soon attached to it.

### THE DUTCH INVASION

William and Mary accepted the invitation and made preparations for the invasion. James became alarmed over the turn of events and began making concessions and promises to the Church of England and to political opponents, but his efforts were too late. On November 5, 1688, William and his army landed at Torbay in southwest England. The involvement of Louis XIV in a war on the Rhine frontier relieved the Dutch from the fear of a French invasion. James's position deteriorated rapidly as soldiers, his commander-in-chief, John Churchill, and his daughter, Anne, defected and turned against him; even Whig and Tory peers began raising forces to support William and Mary in their local communities. James began negotiations with William but became frightened when he remembered his father's execution. In December he fled to France, conceding a bloodless victory to William.

### *Change of Monarchs*

A convention Parliament met in January 1689, to arrange a constitutional settlement (following the precedent of 1660). After searching for a legal loophole that would not force abandonment of the principle of hereditary succession to the throne, the House of Commons finally declared that James had violated the fundamental laws of the land, had fled the country, and had left the throne vacant by his abdication. The Tories claimed that the throne was not vacant but belonged to Mary, because in their eyes James's son was unacceptable. However, William refused to be only a "gentleman-usher" to his wife, so the Crown was offered jointly to William and Mary. Most Tories joined with the Whigs to forfeit the principle of strict succession (and with it the divine right of kings) in favor of a practical and Protestant settlement. Those who refused the settlement and believed that James was still the legal monarch became known as Jacobites.

### *The Bill of Rights, 1689*

Parliament granted the throne to William and Mary on the conditions set forth in the Declaration (later Bill) of Rights. This document cited the failings of James II and, like the Magna Charta and the Petition of Right, was not concerned with political theories so much as with specific restrictions on royal authority: (1) the use of their suspending power or dispensing power without parliamentary consent was declared illegal; (2) Roman Catholics were prohibited from succeeding to the throne; (3) provisions would be made for frequent sessions of Parliament and freedom of debate; (4) standing armies were prohibited (a notable distinction from the Continent); and (5) the levying of taxes or forced loans without the consent of Parliament was repudiated.

There was no attempt in the bill to revolutionize the political or social structure, because the leaders of the revolution wished to conserve the established order in church and state which they claimed James II had jeopardized. But a fundamental change actually occurred, inasmuch as sovereignty was now transferred from King to Parliament by the Bill of Rights. If Parliament could enthrone monarchs by legislative act, it could also dethrone them. John Locke became the patron saint of this respectable revolution when his argument for the contract theory of government (written earlier) in *Two Treatises of Government* was published in 1690 and appeared to justify the legitimacy of the actions taken.

### THE DILEMMA OF THE CLERGY

Under Charles I the clergy and Anglican royalists had few divided loyalties because the Church and King were on the same side. In 1688 the situation was different. The clergy had a legitimate monarch in James and preached nonresistance to royal authority (the divine right of kings). Were the clerics to continue to support the King if he failed to support the established church? When the Convention Parliament of 1689 forced a decision between elected kings and hereditary kings, many clergy had difficulty switching their allegiance. Over four hundred clerics refused to take the oath of allegiance to William; they became known as Non-jurors. The majority, however, accepted the King designated by Parliament as their legal monarch.

## WILLIAM AND MARY

William's first task was to make good his disputed title of King in the British Isles. Thereafter, he was preoccupied by his lifelong goal of halting the expansionist designs of Louis XIV. William was not a popular ruler and

made clear his preference for his beloved Holland. His greatest achievement was as a diplomat and statesman. He held together the warring factions in England and was the architect of the coalitions that kept in check Louis XIV. Under William and Mary a diplomatic revolution occurred as England reversed its foreign policy from being a satellite of Louis XIV to becoming the leader of the European coalition against France.

### *Constitutional Settlement*

The acceptance of William and Mary as joint monarchs took different patterns in England, Scotland, and Ireland. The Glorious Revolution brought a series of constitutional reforms in England and a transfer of ultimate power to Parliament, prosperity to Scotland, but only repression and bitterness in Ireland. In England the Bill of Rights which set up the parliamentary conditions by which the monarch must govern was strengthened by several subsequent acts. The Toleration Act (1689), which was supported by William and the Whigs, gave freedom of worship to most Protestant dissenters; Catholics, Unitarians, and Jews were still restricted, and all the disabilities of the Clarendon Code and Test Act remained in force. A mutiny among the soldiers led to the Mutiny Act (1689) which allowed the king to raise an army and rule by martial law for a period of six months. To be renewed the Act demanded the annual assent of Parliament. To prevent a repetition of the seventeen-year Cavalier Parliament, the Triennial Act (1694) stipulated a maximum three-year life for any Parliament. The Treasons Act (1696) provided safeguards for accused Englishmen: the accused may see the indictment, be permitted to have counsel, and cannot be convicted without two witnesses to an overt act of treason. The Act of Settlement (1701) concluded the constitutional changes (see Domestic Politics.)

### SCOTTISH SETTLEMENT

The Church of Scotland and the Lowlanders preferred the Dutch Calvinist William to the Pro-Catholic James. Consequently, the Scottish Parliament met in convention, declared that James II had forfeited his crown, and offered it to William and Mary. But the Highlanders, with typical affection for the Stuarts and contempt for the Lowlanders, gathered around Viscount Dundee and defeated William's troops at Killiecrankie (1689). When Dundee was killed in battle, resistance fell apart, and most of the Highland clans took the oath of allegiance to William. By 1692 only the MacDonalds of Glencoe had delayed their submission. William's advisors urged him to extract obedience, and soldiers of the Campbell clan were sent to discipline the clansmen of Glencoe. After being entertained by their unsuspecting hosts for twelve days, the soldiers treacherously slaughtered a large number of MacDonalds in the night. William and Mary made Presbyterianism the established church in Scotland and offered numerous concessions to the

Scottish Parliament. But friction with England mounted when the English Parliament excluded Scottish trade from England.

### THE WAR WITH IRELAND

With good reason the Irish preferred James II, who favored their religion, to the discrimination that they usually suffered at the hands of their Protestant overlords. Thus the Irish Parliament espoused the cause of James and took advantage of the English revolution to confiscate Protestant lands. In 1689 James arrived to lead the Irish, bringing French troops and money with him. All of Ireland except beleaguered Londonderry and Enniskillen recognized James as king. William and his troops arrived in Ireland in 1690 and on July 12 routed the army of James at the Battle of the Boyne River (the "Glorious Twelfth" for Orangemen—members of the Orange Lodge). James fled to the Continent, leaving the Irish Catholics to fight on until their last stronghold, Limerick, capitulated in 1691.

**The Irish Settlement.** The Treaty of Limerick (1692) offered the Irish relatively generous terms, including retention of the religious privileges given them under Charles II, permission for Irish soldiers to join the French army, and the restoration of estates confiscated since the reign of Charles II. But the Irish Protestants and the English Parliament had no intention of honoring the treaty. Instead, even more oppressive legislation was passed against Ireland. These laws barred Catholics from the Irish Parliament, from teaching in schools, from serving in the army or navy, or from holding any civil office. Protestant heirs received priority of inheritance over Catholic heirs, and interfaith marriages were penalized. At the insistence of English traders Parliament also passed restrictive acts which effectively destroyed the trade and industry of every Irish staple. Thus the Irish espousal of James resulted in political and religious tyranny for them, followed by poverty.

### *The War with France*

King William added the resources of England and Scotland to his continental coalition against France and halted Louis XIV at the zenith of his power. The ensuing war was the beginning of a series of encounters between England and France which lasted for over a century. This second "Hundred Years' War," unlike the first, was not an effort to seize Continental France or the French crown, but was a duel for leadership in commerce, colonies, and sea power.

### CAUSES OF THE WAR OF THE LEAGUE OF AUGSBURG, 1689-1697

The League of Augsburg was formed in 1686 to prevent French conquest of the Spanish Netherlands (modern Belgium). In 1689 William III eagerly attached England to the League to protect the national interests which the Stuart kings had neglected. France was the most powerful nation on the Continent, and if Louis triumphed in his expansionist schemes, political

absolutism and an intolerant Catholicism (as reflected by Louis's revocation of the Edict of Nantes in 1685) would threaten England as well as the Continent. Moreover, France had become England's major opponent in commerce and a colonial rival in India and in North America. Finally, Louis defied and insulted England by refusing to recognize William as King; instead he had kept James at the French court and had provided him with men and money for the invasion of Ireland. In May 1689, Parliament declared war, and England returned to the leadership of forces opposed to Catholic absolutism.

#### COURSE OF THE WAR

The land war was dominated by a series of siege operations in Belgium in which the French won the major battles until William inflicted the first serious check on Louis's army by recapturing Namur. In 1690 the French fleet defeated the combined English-Dutch fleets at Beachy Head, and James and Louis made preparations for an invasion of England. However, the invasion army was kept in port when England and Holland regained control of the Channel in 1692 by routing the French fleet at La Hogue. On the southern front the French army invaded Savoy and made good progress until the English fleet blockaded the French navy and cut off their supplies. Meanwhile, in North America King William's War was being waged between English and French colonies. The French under Count Frontenac and with the help of Indian allies made a series of attacks on the New England colonies. Fighting on a small scale also took place in India and Africa.

#### THE PEACE OF RYSWICK, 1697

France was financially exhausted from the heavy expenses of Louis's half-century of intermittent wars, and the coalition had temporarily halted his schemes for expansion. By the treaty of Ryswick France restored all territory conquered since 1678 except Strasbourg; William was recognized as King of England; and the Dutch were allowed stronger fortifications along the French frontier. Although the peace was indecisive, the spread of French power was checked. An important by-product of the war was the establishment of the Bank of England in 1694 which stabilized England's financial system. To meet the heavy expenses of a world war a permanent national debt was legalized. This meant that the credit of the nation could be used in borrowing, and a portion of the debt payments would be charged to future generations, a practice eagerly copied by other nations.

After the death of Queen Mary in 1694, the aloof and alien King William had little popular appeal to British subjects or political appeal to the Whig and Tory factions, except as the symbol of Protestantism and national

#### Renewal of the War with France

**THE ACT OF SETTLEMENT, 1701**

This legislation insured a Protestant succession and reflected the anti-William sentiment of Parliament by placing further restrictions on the monarchy. The act provided that the crown should next descend to Anne (sister of Mary and daughter of James II) and then, if she had no living children, to Princess Sophia, granddaughter of the first Stuart King who ruled the small state of Hanover in northwest Germany; future English monarchs must join the Church of England and must not leave the country or involve England in war without consent of Parliament; royal officials were excluded from the House of Commons, and, after the Hanoverian succession, no foreigner could hold office or title to land; finally, judges could not be removed from office by the Crown (establishing a judiciary independent of the executive); they could only be removed by an act of Parliament.

For his part William was annoyed by the constant party bickering which prevented unified support of the war effort against France. The Whigs hoped that the King would become a party leader and keep the Tories out of office as Charles II had kept the Whigs out; but William sought to avoid political intrigues. By 1694 Tory opposition to the war was so strong, however, that the Whig faction won the cooperation of the King and gained a majority in the Commons. During the interval of peace with France the Tories (the peace party) returned to power and flouted William by reducing the size of the army and navy. William hoped for a Whig victory in the election of 1701 in order to win support of his plans for a new coalition against Louis XIV; however, the Tories retained control and opposed William's renewed military effort against France.

The War of the Spanish Succession (1701-1713) broke out when King Charles II of Spain died childless and willed his kingdom to a grandson of Louis XIV, despite the Partition Treaties laboriously arranged by William the will and antagonized England further by recognizing the son of James II (known as the Old Pretender) as king of England—a violation of the terms of the Peace of Ryswick. Once again William fashioned a Grand Alliance of England, Holland, Austria, and several German states against the Bourbon kingdoms of France and Spain and appointed John Churchill, earl of Marlborough, as commander-in-chief. By December of 1701 the House of Commons was sympathetic to the war, but William died three months later, leaving the administration of the war to Queen Anne and Marlborough.

**T**he restored monarchy of 1660 never again had the degree of autonomy of action found before the Civil War. The Crown retained control of the executive branch of government, but the king was left utterly dependent upon Parliament for money, if he was not to use illegal or secret means to meet royal expenditures. A second or "glorious" revolution in 1688 unseated yet another Stuart. It was supported by many in the political establishment as a necessary step to "conserve" traditional and religious arrangements, not as an effort to change the status quo. The heritage of the Puritan Revolution and the Glorious Revolution affected the constitutional settlements of 1688-1701. Parliament became the dominant partner and source of sovereignty in government thereafter. After the death of Queen Mary, King William succeeded in holding together an alliance against France and planning a world war that would span the reign of his successor, Queen Anne.

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12

**The Last of the Stuarts:  
1702-1714**

- 1702 Queen Anne succeeds William as the last of the Stuart rulers
- 1703 Birth of John Wesley, who will lead a religious revival in Britain
- 1704 Marlborough defeats the French at Battle of Blenheim
- Publication of *The Battle of the Books* by satirist Jonathan Swift
- 1707 Act of Union unites two kingdoms of England and Scotland to form the United Kingdom of Great Britain
- 1710 Robert Harley and the Tories take over government leadership from Whigs after election
- 1713 Successful conclusion for Britain of War of the Spanish Succession in the Peace of Utrecht
- 1714 George I, elector of Hanover, arrives in England to maintain the Protestant succession

**Q**ueen Anne was the last of the Stuarts, in spite of bearing sixteen children; all died before her. She was more successful in uniting the two kingdoms of England and Scotland which her great-grandfather, James I, had attempted earlier without success.



For all but the final year of Anne's reign, England was at war with France and emerged with impressive victories on the Continent and colonial and commercial rewards in the peace treaty. John Churchill, duke of Marlborough, led the successful coalition against France.

The Queen presided over a kaleidoscopic political alignment that began and ended with a Tory administration. Although her reign was dominated by the great war with France, it was also a time of internal achievement: Newton in science, Wren in architecture, Godolphin, Harley, Churchill, and Bolingbroke in politics.

## THE WAR AGAINST FRANCE

The War of the Spanish Succession (1702–1713) involved England in a world war. In addition to leading the coalition against Louis XIV, England had two armies on the Continent, fleets in the Mediterranean, Atlantic, and North Sea, and also confronted the French in North America and in the West Indies. For the first time in two generations a large French army was decisively defeated. England's victories brought about a substantial enlargement of her colonial empire as set forth in the Treaty of Utrecht ending the war.

### Course of the War

The prevalent fear in Europe that Bourbon monarchs on both the thrones of France and Spain would permit Louis XIV to dominate the Continent prompted the formation of the Grand Alliance. John Churchill, serving as commander-in-chief and coordinator, succeeded by military genius and diplomatic skill in keeping this Grand Alliance together and achieved its first spectacular victory in 1704. At Blenheim, Churchill, who had joined forces with the equally brilliant commander of the Hapsburg army, Prince Eugene of Savoy, defeated the French and the Bavarians and saved Vienna from a French advance. In the same year an Anglo-Dutch fleet captured Gibraltar, and with it the control of the Mediterranean. In 1706, while Prince Eugene was routing the French from Italy, Churchill (now the Duke of Marlborough) won a second decisive battle at Ramillies. By 1708 a third victory at Oudenarde forced the French out of the Spanish Netherlands.

The coalition had achieved its essential goal: the ouster of the French from Italy and the Netherlands. France was exhausted and eager for peace, but several of the allies on the Continent and the Whigs in England insisted on the expulsion of Philip V from Spain. So the war dragged on, becoming more costly in manpower and more controversial in English politics. In Spain the allies took Madrid but could not hold the capital or the country. A treaty with Portugal, however, provided for an Anglo-Portuguese alliance and the exchange of English woollens for Portuguese wines. In 1710 English

troops captured Acadia (Nova Scotia) from the French in North America. A year later Marlborough was dismissed by Tory political manipulation and negotiations for peace began between England and France.

### THE POLITICS OF THE WAR

At the beginning of the war Marlborough and Sidney Godolphin, the chief ministers to the Queen, had only lukewarm support from their Tory party. The Whigs who favored a vigorous war policy gained the majority in the election of 1705. Marlborough and Godolphin continued as chief ministers, working successfully with the Whig faction in control of the Commons. When the Whig party refused to negotiate for peace after English security was achieved in battle, the war-weary electorate voted in a Tory majority in 1710. Tory ministers (Robert Harley and Henry St. John) now replaced the Whig advisors and pushed for a peace without ousting Philip V from the Spanish throne. Marlborough, the exalted war hero, was discredited by charges of misuse of public funds and went into exile to escape prosecution. St. John began peace negotiations with France in the Dutch city of Utrecht without the consent of all the allies.

### THE PEACE OF UTRECHT, 1713

The provisions of Utrecht permitted Philip V to keep the Spanish throne, but excluded him from accession to the French throne. Austria acquired Milan, Naples, and the Spanish Netherlands, and England retained Gibraltar, Minorca, Acadia (Nova Scotia), Newfoundland, and title to all the Hudson Bay territory in Canada. The English also broke the Spanish monopoly on trade with her colonies by securing the right to supply slaves to South America (the Asiento Treaty with Philip).

The Peace, which recognized England as a major military power and the leading naval power, greatly expanded the colonial and commercial empire of Britain at the expense of France and Spain. England's commercial rival, Belgium (and particularly the city of Antwerp), was transferred to Austria, a country without a navy. Thus the fear of the Low Countries being ruled by a powerful, unfriendly country was removed. The war left France exhausted and nearly bankrupt, while the Dutch, after their century of glory, sank to an unimportant second-rate power in the eighteenth century.

## QUEEN ANNE AND THE POLITICIANS

Anne's advisors supplied the leadership during her reign; the Queen took her royal responsibilities seriously, but she did not rule. Considered slow-witted and obstinate, she was devoted to the Anglican Church and



favoured the principles and prejudices of the Tory party. Although the Queen tried to remain aloof to the political factions in Parliament, she was forced to include Whigs among her ministers whenever the Whigs controlled Parliament. The Queen's original advisors had great influence over her, but were all dismissed from office before her death.

### ***The Political Triumvirate***

In the first half of Anne's reign three persons dominated the government: Sarah Churchill, duchess of Marlborough, was the Queen's closest confidante; her husband, the Duke, was the Queen's military and political advisor; and Sidney Godolphin, who provided the parliamentary leadership for Marlborough's campaigns, served as Lord Treasurer. Both men were moderate Tories; however, when the High Church Tories attacked Marlborough's conduct of the war and the Nonconformists, Godolphin stayed in power only through the backing of Anne at court and the Whigs in Parliament. After the Whigs increased their numbers in the election of 1705, several ultra-Tory ministers were dismissed by the Queen; nevertheless, the moderate ministers Godolphin, Marlborough, and Robert Harley were acceptable to the Whigs and remained in office.

In 1707 the Duchess of Marlborough lost her influence when Robert Harley's relative, Abigail Masham, replaced her as the Queen's closest confidante. The following year the Whigs increased their majority in the Commons and demanded more ministerial (cabinet) offices; Anne consented under pressure but never forgave the Whigs. Godolphin and Marlborough made a political alliance with the Whig leadership, and the war was now conducted with vigor. But by this time the nation was becoming weary of the war.

### ***Act of Union, 1707***

The Godolphin-Marlborough-Harley ministry achieved a major feat with the Act of Union which joined the kingdoms of England and Scotland. The temporary union imposed on both nations by Cromwell had been dissolved with the Restoration in 1660. The Scots were lured into the union for economic reasons. The English feared their security would again be menaced if the Scots chose a separate monarch after the death of Anne, the last of the Stuarts, which the Scottish Parliament indicated it would do. Commissioners from each kingdom met and negotiated the terms of union: (1) the Scottish Kirk would continue independent of England, as would the court system; (2) Scotland would give up its Parliament and, in its place, send forty-five members to the House of Commons and select sixteen peers to represent the Scottish nobility in the House of Lords; (3) Scotland would agree to the Hanoverian succession; (4) Scotland would receive a large financial grant for assuming its share of the English national debt; and (5) Scotland would receive the same trading rights as England. Although many Scots were unhappy with the prospects of being governed

from London, the act brought trade and relative prosperity to Scotland and expanded their potential for political and business leadership in Great Britain.

### **THE NEW POLITICIANS**

The Whigs, already disliked by the Queen, began to lose popular support as the war dragged on. In 1709 the government impeached Dr. Henry Sacheverell for preaching two sermons in which he criticized Godolphin, the Whig ministry, and the revolution of 1688. The London mobs made Sacheverell a popular hero and attacked Whig homes and Dissenter chapels. The Queen took advantage of this political climate to dismiss Godolphin and other Whig ministers. In the election of 1710 the Tory faction won a majority, and Robert Harley became Lord Treasurer and Henry St. John, his chief colleague. The Tories punished leading Whigs—Robert Walpole was sentenced to the Tower—and negotiated a peace with France. To pursue peace overtures it was necessary to oust Marlborough, the last important leader of the war ministry. In 1711 he was replaced as commander by the Tory Duke of Ormonde. The House of Commons backed Harley in his negotiations with France; however, to win a majority in the House of Lords, Queen Anne was forced to create twelve new peers.

The Tory cabinet took advantage of Jonathan Swift's and Daniel Defoe's literary talents to subsidize essays supporting the government. It was this cabinet that began the practice of coming to a consensus on policy in order to strengthen its case before seeking the Queen's approval. Although Queen Anne favored the Tories and carefully chose her ministers, she realized that a ministry was useless if it could not win votes in Parliament and that changing political alignments in Parliament could not be ignored.

### **TORY STATUTES**

With the support of Queen Anne, the Harley-St. John ministry (1710-1714) passed a series of acts aimed at punishing the Whigs and the Dissenters. The Occasional Conformity Act put an end to the practice of Dissenter officeholders (mostly Whigs) who complied with the Test Act by taking the Anglican sacrament only once a year. The Property Qualification Act required members of the House of Commons to hold landed property with an annual value of £300 or £600 (depending on the constituency). This act handicapped the Whigs, whose wealth was more likely to be in business than in land. The Schism Act was aimed at Dissenter academies; it required all teachers to be licensed by a bishop and to attend the Anglican Church.

## THE SUCCESSION QUESTION

As the time approached to put into effect the clauses of the Act of Settlement (1701) which would transfer the dynasty to the Hanoverians as the closest Protestant succession to the throne if none of Queen Anne's children survived childhood, there was little enthusiasm for the Hanoverian cause. The Whigs favored the Hanoverian dynasty for political and religious reasons; however, they were not in control of Parliament. The Tories were divided between allegiance to the Stuarts, known as the Jacobite faction, and to the Anglican Church. With his party divided, Henry St. John (now Viscount Bolingbroke) schemed to become indispensable in determining the succession, but his plans went awry and he was unable to control the situation.

### Divided Loyalties

When Anne became ill in 1713, the issue of the succession loomed large. The Tories had tried and failed to get James, the Old Pretender (son of James II), to change his religion. When that hope was rebuffed, they became divided on the succession. Lord Treasurer Harley (now Earl of Oxford) led the moderate Tories, who favored the Hanoverian succession. Meanwhile Bolingbroke intrigued with the opportunist Abigail Masham, the Queen's chief lady-in-waiting, to persuade Anne to dismiss Oxford. Finally, on July 27, 1714, Oxford was dismissed as the Queen's chief minister.

Viscount Bolingbroke, with a mind uncluttered by loyalties to anyone but himself, was one of the most witty, brilliant, and cultured political leaders of Queen Anne's reign. During the few days after he had accomplished the fall of Oxford, Bolingbroke was the most powerful person in the realm but he hesitated to act. His schemes for controlling the succession, whatever they were, collapsed. The Duke of Shrewsbury, a moderate Tory and one of the seven signatories to the petition to invite William to England in 1688, took the lead in forestalling Bolingbroke's plans. Supported by the Duke of Somerset and the Duke of Argyll, the Privy Council met on July 30 and rushed through a motion urging the Queen to make Shrewsbury Lord Treasurer, in which capacity he would be responsible for matters relating to the succession. Bolingbroke was not prepared to challenge the Privy Council, and Shrewsbury received the Treasurer's staff from the dying Queen.

### THE CHANGE OF DYNASTIES

The Tories lost an opportunity to consolidate their position by failing to agree to the succession of the Hanoverians. Instead, they hedged their loyalties so that the early Hanoverian monarchs considered the Whigs their friends and the Tories tainted with Jacobitism. Two months before Anne's

## STUART ENGLAND

final illness, Sophia, electress of Hanover and granddaughter of James I, had died and left the succession to her son, George. Upon the death of Anne, Shrewsbury arranged the transition, and in September 1714, George, the elector of Hanover, along with his German advisors, mistresses, and hounds, arrived in England. With the Hanoverian succession Protestantism and a limited monarchy were maintained.

The seventeenth-century population of England increased to over five million by 1701. Commerce and colonies became increasingly important and brought prosperity, but their future growth would be contingent on the control of the seas that was won under Queen Anne. Political participation and social mobility certainly existed to a greater degree in England than on the Continent, but those who overcame political and class barriers were the exception, not the rule. The century still belonged to the favored few, not to the common people, because the great majority of citizens did not participate in the political events or share in the increasing wealth. London was the one metropolitan center. Most people (74 percent) lived in villages and continued to do so until the Industrial Revolution.

Religious controversy spanned the century, but passions over religious differences were moderated by 1700. The security of the country and of the established church, along with the rationalism of the dawning Enlightenment, muted religious intolerance. The changing standards and thinking of the century are mirrored in the arts, architecture, and literature.

### Stuart Literature

The scientific revolution and the "age of Newton" mark the dawn of modern cosmology and modern thought. Seventeenth-century writing was characterized by a variety of forms and themes, ranging from the majestic sweep of John Milton's blank verse to the shallow, affected drama of the Restoration and the pamphlet literature of Queen Anne's reign.

### POETRY

The Anglican clerics Robert Herrick (1591-1674) and John Donne (1573-1631) are probably the most representative and respected poets of the early seventeenth century. Herrick's lyrical poems, dealing with classical myths of love or pastoral beauty, with occasional touches of fresh irreverence, are unsurpassed in craftsmanship. Donne's earlier works included satires and elegies but his metaphysical poems, such as *Songs and Sonnets*, are imbued with moods of introspection and distinguished by

remarkable innovations in stanzaic patterns. His poetry influenced Dryden and a host of later poets.

John Milton (1608–1674) was the official apologist for the Cromwellian period. Following the Restoration he created three great poems in blank verse, *Paradise Lost*, *Paradise Regained*, and *Samson Agonistes*, in which his genius blended classical and Biblical themes into epics magnificent in scope and imagery; these heroic, profound, and tragic themes far transcended traditional Puritan theology.

Satire and the heroic couplets were the most marked characteristics of poetic efforts in the Restoration period. Samuel Butler (1612–1680) ridiculed the Puritans in his *Hudibras*; whereas Andrew Marvell (1621–1678) displayed imaginative wit in *To His Coy Mistress* and justly praised the Lord Protector in the *Horatian Ode upon Cromwell's Return from Ireland*. The poet laureate of the Restoration was John Dryden (1631–1700), whose versatile endeavors—criticism, poetry, drama, and satire—moved English literature to the threshold of the Augustan Age, identified with the reign of Queen Anne. His poems include *Absalom and Achitophel*, *The Hind and the Panther*, and *Alexander's Feast*. More than anyone else he dominated the last half of the century and dictated its literary taste.

## PROSE

Essentially, the prose of the seventeenth century is formal, utilitarian, and precise. The *Essays* of Sir Francis Bacon (1561–1626) are polished treatises on civil and ethical matters written in terse, epigrammatic style. John Bunyan's (1628–1688) *The Pilgrim's Progress* combines moral instruction with Biblical allegory in a storytelling framework of remarkable invention and technique. The midcentury was dominated by a variety of writers on theology such as William Chillingworth, Jeremy Taylor, George Herbert, and Richard Baxter, and such political writers as John Lilburne, William Walwyn, and William Prynne. Isaac Walton (1593–1683), wrote brief biographies of contemporary poets and *The Compleat Angler*, a pleasant, witty treatise on fishing. Samuel Pepys's *Diary* and John Aubrey's *Brief Lives* are invaluable sketches of social history spanning the last half of the seventeenth century. The King James Version of the Bible (1611) became the most influential book in the English language. It taught the richness of that language to three centuries of readers.

## DRAMA

The theater had its greatest vogue under James I and Charles II. Shakespeare, who lived until 1616, had many of his plays performed before King James. Ben Jonson (1572–1637) became the most influential and admired playwright of the early seventeenth century. His vivid characterizations and satirical humor are found in *Volpone*, *The Alchemist*, and *Bar-*

## History and Philosophy

*holomew Fair*. Perfection in dramatic structure and a keen interest in the politics of the day were distinguishing features of the plays of Philip Massinger (1583–1640). Puritan disapproval restricted the theater during the interregnum, but Charles II and his court. In reaction to the Puritan spirit, the Comedy of Manners accented lasciviousness and cynical worldliness. Among the playwrights who wrote these mock-heroic and romantic comedies were Dryden, William Wycherley, William Congreve, and John Vanbrugh. By the turn of the century, sentimental, domestic comedy, full of moral instructions and middle-class respectability, as in Richard Steele's *The Tender Husband* (1705), became the vogue of the "reformed" theater.

History was generally written for public readership, not for an academic audience. Frequently historians incorporated memoirs or political philosophy in their writings. Pre-civil war historians included Sir Walter Raleigh and his influential *The History of the World*, Sir Francis Bacon, and Lord Herbert of Cherbury. Popular postwar works were Lord Clarendon's *History of the Rebellion* and Bishop Burnet's *History of His Own Time*. Political theorists dealt with the issues of ultimate sovereignty, royal prerogative versus common law, and the rights of the state and of the citizenry. King James I justified the prerogative rights of kingship in *The True Law of Free Monarchy*.

The philosopher Francis Bacon replaced Aristotelian concepts with an inductive approach to knowledge in *The Advancement of Learning* and *New Atlantis*. Sir Edward Coke argued for a "fundamental law" that preceded and was superior to royal law. Sir Thomas Hobbes (1588–1679) was a cynical secularist who argued powerfully for absolute monarchy on the grounds of materialistic self-interest in *Leviathan*. James Harrington's (1611–1677) answer to Hobbes was his *Commonwealth of Oceana* (1656) which influenced political thought in the interregnum by an economic interpretation of political power and an argument for a mixed constitution and a "balance of property."

In the reign of Charles II, George Savile (1633–1695), marquis of Halifax, published anonymously *The Character of a Trimmer*; he was an apologist for the golden mean in politics, which, in his terms, meant a limited monarchy. John Locke (1632–1704) in his epoch-making *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* argued for empiricism—all knowledge comes through experience—and rejected the theory of innate knowledge. In political theory Locke was a utilitarian like Hobbes, but opposed Hobbes's all-powerful state. In the second of his *Two Treatises on Government* (1690) Locke supported a government limited to certain areas of jurisdiction by a social contract between the governor and the governed. If government

abused the liberty or the property rights of the subjects, the right to cancel the contract and to revolt was permissible. Locke's ideas of individual liberty and freedom from tyranny, religious or political, spread to France and America, and would be heard again in the American Declaration of Independence.

### Scientific Interests

In the seventeenth century a scientific revolution shattered traditional ways of thinking and the medieval world view on cosmology and physiology. The plea for scientific inquiry, introduced by Roger Bacon in the *New Atlantis* and the *Novum Organum*, and coupled with the observations of Copernicus, Kepler, and Galileo in astronomy, stimulated a fundamental reordering of the old Ptolemaic universe. William Gilbert (1540-1603) offered new ideas in magnetism, and William Harvey (1578-1657) explained the circulation of the blood.

With the establishment of the Royal Society of London for Improving Natural Knowledge, scientists gained additional freedom and respectability. Robert Boyle's law in chemistry and his critique of classical views replaced outmoded Aristotelian theories. But the major scientific breakthrough was made by Sir Isaac Newton, professor of mathematics at Cambridge, with the publication of his *Principia Mathematica* (1687), a monumental treatise dealing with the motion of celestial bodies according to the law of universal gravitation. The spirit of inquiry and the inductive method of thinking flourished in Restoration England and uninhibited by the Counter Reformation that crushed science after 1660 in Catholic Europe.

### Religious Developments

In no other century were religious and literary issues so interwoven. The controversies and convictions which spanned the civil war and interregnum inspired a variety of religious expressions and freedoms: the Fifth Monarchy men, George Fox and the Quakers, the Brownists and Congregational church government, and Cromwell's sponsorship of religious toleration. The efforts of Archbishop Laud to enforce religious uniformity increased Puritan opposition and writings. The Clarendon Code deliberately made the Anglican Church more exclusive and forced Nonconformists from its membership. These Dissenters influenced English politics in the following century and joined with the rationalists and the utilitarians to make freedom from unfair restrictions, religious or political, a common goal. By the end of the Stuart period the Anglican Church was beginning to feel the effects of increasing rationalism and a decline of religious fervor. This development in the church was foreshadowed by the Oxford rationalists William Chillingworth (1602-1644) and John Hales (1584-1656) and the Cambridge Platonists John Worthington (1618-1671) and Ralph Cudworth (1617-1688).

### Social Developments

Since England's population was still four-fifths rural in the seventeenth century, the relationship of individuals to the land largely determined their social and economic class. The gentry or country squires, who owned large estates, were the most influential class, living in ease in their country manors most of the year but increasingly moving to London for the winter season. Politically, this class supplied the justices of the peace. Under the Stuarts the gentry won control of the House of Commons and forced political concessions from the king, such as the Petition of Right, the Triennial Act, and the Bill of Rights. Below the gentry were a diminishing class of yeomen, perhaps numbering 160,000, who were owners of smaller landholdings, but enfranchised and proud of their independence. Tenant farmers were increasing in number, although outnumbered greatly by the rural wage owner who knew the full meaning of poverty and had little opportunity to participate in national affairs except in such episodes as the Leveller movements of the civil war.

The moral tone of Puritanism dominated social customs until the Restoration. The court and the upper classes then repudiated Puritan tradition and took advantage of their new social liberties until a more sober court, prompted by the moralizing essayists of the Augustan writers in Queen Anne's reign, muted these excesses and encouraged a refinement of social conduct.

### AGRICULTURAL IMPROVEMENTS

Agriculture continued as the occupation of the great majority of the population, with minor production improvements resulting from the use of fertilizers and the rotation of crops. The enclosure movement continued with less opposition as the need for converting the open-field system into hedged fields became generally recognized; and yet by the end of the century less than half the land was enclosed. Peasants who lost employment because of enclosures sought work in the industries of Bristol, York, Newcastle, and London.

### TRADE AND COMMERCE

A significant growth in commerce, particularly in foreign trade, characterized the second half of the seventeenth century. Except for the East India and the Hudson Bay companies, monopolistic companies were broken by laws favoring competitive enterprise. Foreign commerce was promoted by legislation designed to further imperial trade and guarantee a favorable balance of trade. Commercial legislation, such as the Act of Navigation (1660), was an application of the mercantile theory which assumed that national prosperity was based on a favorable balance of trade and that any English expansion of commerce could only be at the expense of commercial rivals (Holland and Spain). Laws promoting exports and restricting imports,



*The Age of Queen Anne was also known as the Augustan Age since the greatness of its literary achievement was said to resemble that of Rome under Augustus. Jonathan Swift, Daniel Defoe, Richard Steele, Christopher Wren's "new London," and Isaac Newton's "new science" gave evidence of this age of transition toward the eighteenth-century Enlightenment.*

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### ***The Growth of Empire***

the expansion of the merchant navy to move exports, and a stronger navy to protect shipping became accepted features of the mercantile theory. In terms of imperial policy the acts of trade were devised to make the colonies serve as suppliers of raw materials and as markets for manufactured goods; also, the acts attempted to exclude all but English or colonial ships from the carrying trade. The preference given to colonial over foreign goods, along with the protection of the royal navy, were advantageous to English colonies at first. However, since colonial manufacturing was restricted, the acts would hinder the expansion of the American economy as the colonies developed. In practice, the mercantile acts were not a serious deterrent to colonial industry because they were only occasionally enforced; nevertheless, the mercantile policy became a growing source of grievance in the thirteen colonies.

The English colonies exercised far greater independence of action than the colonies of any other European nation in the seventeenth century. In their charters and in their customs the colonies were to be "little Englands"; in the eyes of English lawmakers they were conceived of as settlements to promote English commerce. Economic and religious motives were paramount in the establishment of the North American colonies.

To most of the Scots and English, however, their settlement in Ireland and the colonies in Bermuda and in the West Indies were at least as important as the American colonies. Bermuda received its royal charter in 1615. During the remainder of the century Barbados, Jamaica, and the Bahamas were settled and became prosperous through a lively trade in sugar, molasses, tobacco, and cotton. These colonies, like the American colonies, were administered by an English governor and local assemblies. The East India Company received a new charter as a joint-stock company and, from its centers at Bombay and Madras, competed with the princes of Maratha in southwest India and with the Dutch for trade and spheres of influence.

The years 1713-1714 ended a quarter-century of wars, from which Britain emerged as the major sea power in the world and a major power in European affairs. The peaceful transfer of dynasties from the Stuarts to the Hanovers made secure the provisions of the Act of Settlement (1701) and the Church of England.

During Anne's reign political factions—the Whigs and the Tories—became more clearly identified. Increasingly rulers needed, for practical, political reasons, to choose their ministers from the dominant party or cliques in the House of Commons. Since she depended to a large degree on her ministers for making policy, the practice of limited monarchy advanced during the rule of Anne.



Georgian Politics:  
1714-1763

- 1714 George I begins the Hanoverian dynasty in Britain
- 1716 Passage of Septennial Act which extends the term of Parliament from three to seven years
- 1720 South Sea Joint Stock Company collapses, precipitating a financial crisis
- 1721 Robert Walpole becomes "Prime Minister"—the first use of the term
- 1726 *Gulliver's Travels* is written by Jonathan Swift
- 1727 George II succeeds his father as King
- 1740 War of the Austrian Succession begins
- 1745 Rebellion, led by Charles Edward Stuart (the Young Pretender) in Scotland, to restore the Stuart dynasty
- 1756 British garrison in Calcutta surrenders; most of the soldiers die in "Black Hole"
- 1756-1763 The Seven Years' War (known as the French and Indian War in North America)
- 1757 William Pitt and the Duke of Newcastle lead government; tide of war shifts from defeat to victory

The Glorious Revolution of 1688 had conserved and sanctified, rather than radically altered, the English political structure and religious settlement. The landed aristocracy dominated politics; the king remained the constitutional center of government and chose his ministers, subject to the increasing need to find a ministry (cabinet) that could work effectively with Parliament.

Because the Whig politicians believed that the settlement of 1688 could best be protected by supporting the Hanoverian succession, the first two Georges repaid this consideration by choosing parliamentary ministers from among the Whigs. During this period the power of the House of Commons grew as ministries became increasingly dependent upon it for support and influence. Such a development disturbed neither the aristocracy nor the monarchy, because the Commons was not yet a popular body. It could be managed by the titled oligarchy or the royal Court, either through nomination of their candidates in the constituencies or by royal patronage and influence.

No politician understood the power of the Crown's extensive patronage better or managed the system more deftly than Robert Walpole. For that reason he was "Prime Minister" for two decades. The period witnessed the expansion of English influence abroad through colonies, commerce, and sea power.

ENGLAND AT THE ACCESSION OF GEORGE I

In 1714 the majority of the country preferred a Hanoverian succession that would ensure a parliamentary and Protestant supremacy to any of the more controversial alternatives of the day promoted by the Jacobites (supporters of a Stuart heir). In contrast to the Stuart period during which political and religious controversies divided the nation, the political leaders of the early eighteenth century were largely satisfied with the settlement of 1688 which had limited the monarchy even though it had failed to reform Parliament.

Abuses in corporate institutions (Parliament, church, municipal government, and universities) continued unchecked as English stability became identified with the status quo and was not to be tampered with. As a result, Britain's expansion and strength in the eighteenth century came largely through the abilities and energies of individuals who were given free rein by the country's uninhibiting laws more than through the reforms or vigor of its institutions. Such reforms would come a century later.

## The New Dynasty

On the death of Queen Anne in August 1714 George, elector of

Brunswick-Luneburg (commonly called Hanover after its principal city), succeeded to the throne in accordance with the terms of the Act of Settlement. Four months earlier, his mother, Sophia, a granddaughter of James I, had died; hence the throne went to her son who was not so eager about his inheritance as his mother had been. The Hanoverian succession was not the most direct line but was the most Protestant, and English acceptance of the new dynasty meant that there would be little likelihood of a Catholic monarch, French troops, or another civil war. On September 18, George I landed in his adopted realm. Dull, stodgy, and already fifty-four years of age, the new King never learned English and his subjects never learned to love or admire him. If they were attached to him, it was largely because he interfered so little with national institutions and because the return of the Stuarts might jeopardize the Anglican and parliamentary arrangement.

## THE STRUCTURE OF SOCIETY

In the early eighteenth century, England had a population of about five and one-half million, the vast majority of which was in the rural areas of the south. London grew rapidly, passing the half-million mark, and new towns and industrial villages in the Midlands began to drain off the rural poor of the south and east. Parliament reflected these changes in its increasing preoccupation with trade, because trade meant wealth and wealth meant power; however, liquid capital had not yet replaced ownership of land as the hallmark of social and political power. Because property was sacrosanct, the laws dealing with crimes against property were numerous and extreme; a child stealing a handkerchief worth a shilling or more was liable for the death penalty.

**The Country.** At the apex of the social scale were the landed aristocracy, rich in estates and political influence, who lived in magnificence and provided a thin veneer of elegance to society. Their interest in, and profit from, agriculture made them supporters of improved farming methods. Next in rank were the country gentry who exercised local authority, often as justices of the peace. However, because of their most modest means and back-country residences, they seldom influenced national politics and, as a class, were identified with the Tories who resented the Whig oligarchy. As enclosures of common land became widespread, country laborers drifted into towns and became unskilled laborers. Many yeoman farmers who could not compete with the large estateholders sold their holdings and became tenant farmers.

**The Towns.** The great merchants had close financial ties with the government and often bought or married their way into the aristocracy. The smaller merchants and shop owners continued a seventeenth-century tradition of thrift and industry as well as a Puritan attitude toward corruption in

## The Ruling Class

high places; many were Dissenters who favored religious toleration at home and an isolationist policy abroad. Craftsmen and artisans worked long hours and made a modest wage so long as trade was good. But the deteriorating economy and spread of a free labor market threatened their position, and two parliamentary acts (1720, 1744) prohibited combination (uniting in protest), after unrest in the textile industry had caused workmen to act together to secure their rights. In the coffee houses of London the disaffected expressed their grievances in attacks on Walpole's government.

Dominating the political scene were the great families of England whose ideas of a balanced constitution explained their allegiance to the Hanoverian rather than the Stuart dynasty. From 1707 to 1801—when one hundred Irish seats were added—the membership of the House of Commons remained frozen at 558. Nevertheless, the power of the Lower House grew steadily during the century without any serious efforts by the Lords to halt the trend, because the political and family interests of the two houses were similar—they represented the same class. By means of political and monetary manipulation the peers could control the selection of candidates in their areas, and in only a minority of constituencies was the outcome of an election ever in doubt.

With no uniform franchise (except for the county seats) and no redistribution of seats, the overrepresented south produced numerous "rotten boroughs" in which a handful of voters could easily be managed with bribes or patronage. "Pocket boroughs" were completely under the control of one individual or family. Thus "the number of votes a peer or squire could secure either by threats, promises, or bribes was the measure of his influence; and a man in eighteenth-century politics was assessed by his influence." With such influence a person could barter for pensions, sinecures, or government appointments. It was not by accident that the position of Prime Minister evolved from the post of First Lord of the Treasury, for patronage secretaries played an essential part in the intimate, yet complex, system of political bargaining that characterized the institutions of the century. With no appointments by examination, political connections and influence were the avenues to success. In this context the borough managers and influential families who controlled anywhere from eight to forty-five seats in the Commons could translate their local power to national parliamentary influence.

\* J. H. Plumb, *England in the Eighteenth Century* (Baltimore, 1950), p. 38.

*The Cabinet*

It was perhaps characteristic of the English that their cabinet system had no definition in law but was essentially the growth of political conventions.

These parties slipped casually into British institutional history under the first two Georges as the most effective arrangement for governing the country. The cabinet served as the link through which the legislature could communicate with, and eventually control, the executive. The problem of limiting the king's power and exerting parliamentary sovereignty was solved, not by excluding the king's ministers from the House of Commons (as the Act of Settlement, 1701, specified and as currently practiced in the United States), but by insisting that the king's advisors sit in Parliament and command parliamentary support.

The term "Prime Minister" came into use initially as a criticism of Robert Walpole for being more prominent in the cabinet than his colleagues. By the time of Pitt the Younger, the term "Prime Minister" had become generally accepted, and the executive functions of the post increased at the expense of the reigning sovereign. Although full responsible government, whereby the cabinet owed collective responsibility to an elected legislature, did not become a necessity until the nineteenth century when party identity was more clearly defined, Walpole and his successors developed an arrangement whereby the prime minister and his cabinet colleagues could control sufficient support in the Commons (assisted by government patronage) to make sure of a majority. In practice the cabinet consisted of a group of politicians, led by one of their number, who could win the support of a majority of those who counted at court and in Parliament. Such a cabinet would stay in power until one of three things happened: the king tired of its members, the members fell out among themselves, or they failed to keep the support of Parliament.

**THE WHIG SUPREMACY**

The Hanoverian monarchs favored the Whigs because the Whigs in turn favored them and were not tainted with Jacobitism (those supporting the claims to the throne of James II and his son, James III, whose name in Latin translated as Jacobus) as were some of the Tories. Therefore the king chose his ministers from the Whig factions, which were controlled by the great landed families and supported by the Nonconformists and the majority of city merchants. The Whigs halted the increasing religious intolerance of the Harley-Bolingbroke years (1710-1714) by repealing the Schism and Occasional Conformity Acts, partly because the Whigs were a minority and needed the support of Dissenters penalized by these acts, partly because the Whig leadership was more latitudinarian in their view of the established Church. Although the Whigs dominated at court and at Westminster, they seldom tampered with the local power of the landed gentry. Like Squire

**POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS, 1714-1754**

After the tempestuous political and religious developments of the Stuart period, the early years of the Hanoverians provided Britain with domestic peace and governmental stability. During these years the Whigs, although split into competing factions in Parliament, nevertheless enjoyed the favor of the first two Georges and composed the various ministries. Chief among Whig ministers was Robert Walpole whose long tenure (1721-1742) as Prime Minister has never been duplicated. The major threat to the Hanoverian supremacy came from the Jacobites. The two Jacobite uprisings of 1715 and 1745 failed to attract English support for the Stuarts and were easily crushed; each defeat discredited the Tories politically and made them appear synonymous with Jacobitism.

**THE HANOVERIAN-WHIG SUPREMACY**

The new dynasty was not popular in Britain. The King's coarse taste, coldness, and German court were not warmly received. George's inability to speak English and his awareness that he could not rule England in the absolute fashion in which he had ruled Hanover made him rely on English ministers and particularly on Whig leaders, because their loyalty to him, unlike that of the Tories, was not in question. In 1714 George appointed a new ministry led by Lord Townshend, and an election early the next year gave the Whigs a majority in the Commons. The Whigs now reciprocated the vindictive partisanship of the Tory years by passing acts of attainder that outlawed Bolingbroke and Ormonde, depriving them of all civil rights, and beginning impeachment proceedings against Oxford. When riots and demonstrations flared up in favor of James Edward Stuart, the Old Pretender, the Whigs passed the Riot Act (1715). This act empowered a magistrate to order the dispersal within the hour of any assemblage of twelve or more persons who were disturbing the peace. Felony charges could be proffered against those failing to comply.

**The Jacobite Rebellion.** Stuart supporters who placed their hopes on an uprising joined a band of Highland clansmen under the leadership of the Earl of Mar. A landing was also planned on the south coast of England, but even before the Pretender landed in Scotland, the Jacobites had been twice defeated. The rebellion fizzled because Englishmen were not inclined to risk a civil war to restore a Catholic dynasty that they still mistrusted; also James proved to be an incompetent and dispiriting leader. Furthermore, King Louis

Western in *Tom Jones*, the landed gentry were usually Tory and exercised influence in the countryside as justices of the peace and as landholders.

XIV died on the eve of the rebellion; his promise of help was not honored by the Duke of Orleans who was regent during the minority of Louis XV. The Septennial Act. The rebellion further discredited the Tories for their Jacobite leanings and permitted the Whigs to gain a decisive political ascendancy which lasted until 1760. The last Tory was dismissed from the cabinet, and the Whigs passed the Septennial Act which extended the life of Parliament from three to seven years. The act gave the Whigs four additional years to entrench their political power. The excuse of unsettled conditions permitted the postponement of an election.

### ***The Stanhope Ministry***

King George's interest in foreign (Hanoverian) affairs helped make James Stanhope, supported by the Earl of Sunderland, the dominant figure in the remodeled all-Whig ministry. This ministry would later divide over Stanhope's adventurous foreign policy. In 1716 George I had completed two alliances of mutual aid with Austria and with France. Stanhope continued this involvement in Continental affairs by completing the Quadruple Alliance (1718) which joined Britain, France, Holland, and Austria against Philip V of Spain, who had designs on Austrian territory and ambitions for the French throne. In 1719 French troops and a British fleet inflicted a double defeat on Spain. Philip abandoned his expansionist plans, dismissed his brilliant minister, Cardinal Alberoni, and negotiated the Treaty of Madrid (1721) which established a defensive alliance with England and France and confirmed earlier political and commercial agreements.

Stanhope was just as successful in the Baltic where Charles XII, the powerful King of Sweden, was challenging Hanoverian interests and encouraging opposition to the new dynasty in England. Stanhope sent the British navy to the Baltic, risking war to protect British interests in northern Europe. The sudden death of Charles made Russia the chief threat in the Baltic. To contain Peter the Great, Stanhope succeeded in allying with Sweden and settling their differences over recognition of Hanover by the treaties of Stockholm and Frederiksburg in 1720. Stanhope's foreign policy helped secure the peace of Europe and recognition of the Hanoverian succession.

Stanhope was less successful in domestic policies. The Schism Act and the Occasional Conformity Act were repealed, but his efforts to abolish the Corporation and Test Acts were defeated. In 1719 Stanhope introduced his peerage bill which would ensure Whig domination of the Lords by virtually freezing its membership. The political purpose was to keep the Prince of Wales, who bitterly opposed his father, from creating sufficient Tory peers as Queen Anne had done to swamp the Whig majority. Walpole denounced the bill as one making the Lords a private corporation and closing the one avenue to rank and honor open to the country gentry. The opposition and independent members coalesced to defeat the bill which, if nothing else,

convinced Stanhope of the wisdom of restoring Walpole and Townshend to the cabinet; they had left over his foreign policy.

### ***The South Sea Bubble***

In 1711 the South Sea Company was chartered as a joint-stock organization to take advantage of South American trade which opened up through the Asiento clauses of the Treaty of Utrecht. At the time, the government was trying to liquidate the national debt more quickly by having portions of it absorbed by several great companies, such as the Bank of England and the East India Company. The South Sea Company devised a sinking fund scheme to pay off the entire debt and permitted the court and members of Parliament to buy a large number of shares. A mania of speculation broke loose as the government appeared to be backing the company. Stocks soared 1,000 percent, and other promoters took advantage of this bull market to advertise the flimsiest of schemes. The bubble burst in August 1720, ruining thousands of investors and precipitating a financial and political crisis.

The dispossessed clamored for scapegoats, and a parliamentary inquiry revealed gross corruption in high places. Members of the cabinet were involved and publicly disgraced, and although Stanhope was not implicated, he suffered a stroke defending his innocence in the House of Lords. The King desperately needed a new political manager, one who was not incriminated in the sorry scandal, and one who could restore public confidence and national credit by his financial abilities. Walpole met these requirements and became chancellor of the exchequer. He performed a remarkable job of extricating the government and the court from the scandal and in restoring the finances and confidence of the nation. The South Sea scandal was the turning point of Walpole's career.

### ***"Prime Minister" Walpole, 1721-1742***

Walpole became head of the Whig faction with the death of Sunderland and held on to his newly won position for twenty-one years. During this time Walpole exerted a primacy among his cabinet colleagues previously unmatched. Through his loyalty to the Crown, bribery ("every man has his price" is attributed to him), patronage, enormous energy for work and mastery of detail, he effectively controlled the machinery of government. As Prime Minister he used his uncanny knack for probing the weaknesses of human nature and sensing public opinion to steer England on a course that was wise and profitable, if not always heroic. He was neither an idealist nor a reformer, but his contribution was substantial. Through his policy of peace and prosperity, he left England powerful and its new dynasty secure. A master manager of people, Walpole reflected and played upon the political morality and shifting political alignments of his day.



## RISE TO PROMINENCE

The son of a Norfolk squire, Sir Robert Walpole became a successful businessman and a typical country squire of his day—coarse in morals and uncouth in manners, a heavy drinker, generous to his friends and indifferent to his opponents. In 1700 he began his political career as a member for a pocket borough belonging to his family. Under Queen Anne he built up a reputation in the area of finance. He was a member of Stanhope's cabinet, but survived its disintegration because of his timely severance from the South Sea Company and his reputation in finance.

**Minister and King.** Under the first two Georges the cabinet became increasingly independent of the king's domination. Because George I was unable to speak English and was more absorbed in Hanoverian affairs, he rarely attended cabinet sessions. Under George II this custom hardened into precedent, which meant that as the king's influence in the cabinet and in parliamentary affairs declined, it became increasingly important to have a cabinet which could command the support of Parliament. Thus under both kings Walpole came close to being an indispensable political manager. Throughout his long career, he sat in the Commons and made it the center of government. Similarly, he made himself the center of the cabinet either by demanding his colleagues' support of his policies or, on occasion, their resignation.

In 1727 George I died and his son came to the throne. George II (1727–1760) was dull, pompous, and hostile to the advisors of his father, and, as was expected, the ministers were dismissed, but not for long. Walpole was too valuable a political manager to lose. He returned to office by outbidding his competitors' promise of an increased royal income and through the support of Queen Caroline, the intelligent and politically astute consort, who commanded King George's confidence, if not his fidelity. Thereafter, George II interested himself chiefly in foreign and court affairs, and Walpole consolidated his position through patronage and pensions. Borough patrons and independent members were rewarded with spoils as Walpole and his political colleague, the Duke of Newcastle, manipulated pensions and Church and state appointments to sustain parliamentary sup-

**Economic Policies.** Not until Gladstone would another Prime Minister master financial details as completely as Walpole. Convinced that a prosperous country required peace, Walpole shunned foreign entanglements and gave his attention to a more efficient development of the nation's commerce and industry. He reduced interest on government borrowing to 4 percent, relaxed colonial restrictions, simplified the confusing tariff rates, and removed export duties from manufactured articles. His economies kept taxes low, especially the tax on land, which won him the support of landowners at court and in Parliament. In 1733 Walpole attempted a major

reform with an excise bill which would extend the excise system of taxation already highly successful on tea, coffee, and chocolate imports. The bill would apply to tobacco and wine. Immediately public and political opposition loudly denounced the proposed bill as an increase in bureaucratic power. Finally Walpole yielded to popular and court pressure and withdrew the bill, and then proceeded to punish his supporters who had deserted him on the measure.

## POLITICAL WARFARE

Walpole's notion of good government emphasized peace abroad, prosperity at home, sound finances, and freedom from controversial issues; he did nothing to upset either the Anglican churchman or the local Tory squire. Such policies were difficult to fight at first, especially when prosperity ensued. But gradually the opposition gained in strength over the years as each colleague Walpole alienated joined their ranks. Bolingbroke, whom Walpole had permitted to return from exile, stood at the center of opposition in the discredited Tory party. Joining the Jacobite opposition were two able, but lazy, Whig leaders, John Carteret and William Pulteney, who were bitter over their exclusion from Walpole's cabinet.

Reaction to the excise bill had increased the ranks of the opposition; those who changed sides protested Walpole's use of pensions and place to keep supporters or were jealous because they were not recipients of patronage. Before 1733 there was not a sufficient number of anti-Walpole Whigs to form a government; after 1733 Chesterfield, Bolton, Cobden and many other Whig peers were eager to provide an alternative ministry. They were joined by a group of young, aspiring Whigs, including William Pitt and George Grenville, who opposed the aging Walpole and his manipulative style of administration. Dubbed the "boy patriots" by the Prime Minister, they claimed to be champions of the people. This heterogeneous "out" group gravitated to the court of Frederick, prince of Wales, who quarreled publicly with his father and was anxious to assume the throne. The opposition finally found Walpole vulnerable on foreign policy.

## WALPOLE AND FOREIGN AFFAIRS

The object of Walpole's foreign policy was simple: to keep England out of a Continental war because wars were expensive and their outcome uncertain. Through a network of alliances Walpole and Townshend strove to keep the Continent from breaking into two armed camps. By the first Treaty of Vienna, Spain and Austria resolved their differences which, in turn, brought on a bellicose attitude in England against Spain. Walpole believed that with the help of France (Treaty of Hanover, 1725) Spain and Austria could be separated; so with indifference to the anti-Spanish sentiment he concluded the Treaty of Seville with Spain in 1729. Two years later, the



second Treaty of Vienna settled the major differences between Hanover and Austria. War was arrested but the alliances depended for their success on a friendly France.

In 1733 the French partnership was jeopardized by a Bourbon family compact made between the rulers of France and Spain even though France's involvement in the war over the Polish Succession (1733-1735) kept the covenant temporarily dormant. England remained neutral in spite of King George's interest in participating in the war; however, Walpole's peace policy was becoming his one vulnerable point, and his opponents quickly capitalized on the anti-Spanish sentiment of the country to condemn his pacifist policy as unpatriotic: declaring war was patriotic, peace was not. Hatred of Spain had increased in the thirties as grievances grew out of England's efforts to break the monopoly of Spanish trade in the Americas. British traders evaded the restrictions of the Asiento clause, and smuggling was heavy. In retaliation, Spanish patrols searched ships in Spanish waters and, on occasion, maltreated British seamen. Walpole attempted negotiations once more and secured a treaty even though the opposition and the nation wanted war. When the cabinet agreed, Walpole yielded to popular pressure and in 1739 England became involved in the War of Jenkins' Ear (named after an English mariner, Robert Jenkins, who claimed that his ship had been boarded and his ear torn off by the Spaniards. He told his tale and showed the withered ear to the House of Commons as evidence of Spanish atrocities. The tale captured the popular imagination). This Anglo-Spanish conflict became the prelude to the War of the Austrian Succession (1740).

### WAR OF THE AUSTRIAN SUCCESSION

In 1740 Emperor Charles VI died, leaving his vast Hapsburg dominions to his only daughter, Maria Theresa. Her accession was confirmed by the Pragmatic Sanction signed by the other leading European states. It was repudiated immediately, however, by Frederick the Great, who came to the Prussian throne in 1740 and who wanted to annex the Austrian province of Silesia. The war, in part, was a struggle between the Hohenzollern and Hapsburg dynasties for domination of the smaller German states. It was also a resumption of the struggle between England and France in which national, commercial, and imperial considerations were interwoven, because neither

nation had yet achieved a decisive colonial or commercial supremacy over the other.

**The War in Europe.** On the Continent, Great Britain, Hanover, Austria, and Holland opposed Prussia, Bavaria, France, and Spain. Britain aided the Austrians with money and dispatched an army to Holland. Frederick invaded and held Silesia. A British victory at Dettingen (1743)—where George II was the last English king to lead an army into battle—was offset by a French triumph at Fontenoy (1745).

**The War Elsewhere.** From 1744 to the conclusion of hostilities Great Britain and France were the chief combatants without either one winning a decisive engagement. The British were successful in several naval encounters; the French captured Madras from the British, and the English took Louisbourg (Acadia) from the French. With commerce suffering and the war drifting on aimlessly, both sides agreed to peace.

**Treaty of Aix-la-Chapelle.** In 1748, the Peace of Aachen ended the War of the Austrian Succession. The treaty signed at Aix-la-Chapelle resulted in (1) a restoration of the *status quo ante bellum* except for Silesia, which Frederick kept; (2) confirmation of the Pragmatic Sanction and the election of Emperor Francis (Maria Theresa's husband); and (3) Spain's agreement to the continuation of British trade with the Americas according to the Treaty of Utrecht. In effect, the treaty became an armed truce, because it left Austria angry over the loss of Silesia, said nothing about the right of search which had led to English-Spanish hostilities, and only offered a breathing spell in the colonial rivalry between England and France until the struggle could be resumed in the Seven Years' War.

### REBELLION OF 1745

Charles Edward Stuart, the son of the Old Pretender, landed in Scotland to press his father's claim. The Young Pretender commanded an army of loyal Highlanders who seized Edinburgh and defeated the British army at Prestonpans. The energetic and charming Bonnie Prince Charlie moved his Jacobite army as far south as Derby hoping for English support which never materialized. With the help of regiments from the Continental wars, the Duke of Cumberland pursued the Scots and finally destroyed their army at Culloden Moor in April 1746. Charles Edward escaped to the Continent, many of his supporters were executed, and the hereditary jurisdiction of the Highland chiefs was taken away. The "Forty-five" was the last serious effort to overthrow the Hanoverian dynasty and restore the Stuarts.

### THE UNEASY PEACE, 1748-1754

The War of the Austrian Succession taught the British, and particularly William Pitt, that a commercial and colonial empire could only be won and held by naval supremacy. Although there was peace in Europe in 1748, the

threatening aspects of Anglo-French rivalry in the colonies overshadowed this calm interlude.

**Rivalry in India.** The truce of 1748 did not extend to India where the rivalry between France and England was shifting from purely commercial competition to a political and military contest. By the eighteenth century the Portuguese and the Dutch were no longer serious competitors. The last of the great Mogul emperors had died in 1707, and, in the scramble for power that ensued among the Indian rulers, conditions were ripe for intrigue. By supporting rival Indian princes, the French and English expanded their influence beyond their respective "factory" posts. Joseph Duplex, the energetic French governor of Pondicherry, supported the pro-French candidate to the throne of the Carnatic. The British backed Mohammed Ali and his claim to the throne. When war broke out between the French and the British, only the magnificent daring of Robert Clive, a clerk of the East India Company turned military captain, saved the Carnatic and Madras from yielding to the French siege. In 1754 Duplex was recalled to France, and Clive and the English engaged French interests in the northeast, around Calcutta.

**Rivalry in North America.** English colonies were strung along the Atlantic seaboard but were not yet interested in a federation (Albany Conference, 1754), which would have utilized their superior manpower to halt French efforts to link the Mississippi and St. Lawrence territories by controlling the Ohio Valley. The French, who had erected forts in this area, defeated George Washington at Fort Necessity (1754). The English attempted to punish the French by sending General Braddock and English regiments against Fort Duquesne; however, the French and Indians ambushed the army and killed Braddock. In 1755 the British retaliated by deporting some ten thousand French Acadians (lamented in Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's 1847 poem *Evangeline: A Tale of Acadie*) from Nova Scotia and scattering them from Maine to Louisiana. Thus war had actually begun in India and America before it was formally declared in Europe.

**Diplomatic Revolution.** By 1754 the alliances of the War of the Austrian Succession had disintegrated. National self-interest and new jealousies, such as the dislike of the "Three Furies"—Czarina Elizabeth, Empress Maria Theresa, and Madame de Pompadour—for Frederick the Great brought about a new diplomatic alignment. When Britain and France declared war in May 1756, Britain and Prussia were allied against France, Austria, and Russia.

## Domestic Politics

After Walpole's resignation, a "Broad-bottom Administration" led by Lord Wilmington, though dominated by Carteret, brought in some opposition Whigs and a few Tories. Carteret's venturesome conduct of the war and

his inability to control the Commons united the opposition and forced his resignation in 1744. For the next ten years (1744–1754), Henry Pelham headed the cabinet ably assisted in the Lords by his brother, the Duke of Newcastle. The Duke in his painstaking, nervous manner skillfully held together a parliamentary majority for his brother as he had done for Walpole. When George II tried to get rid of Pelham in 1746, the cabinet resigned in a body, and since no alternative cabinet could manage Parliament, George was forced to take back the Pelhams on their terms, which included the admission of William Pitt to the ministry. In 1754 Henry Pelham died, and Newcastle took over the leadership of the cabinet just as Britain was entering the Seven Years' War.

## WILLIAM PITT AND THE SEVEN YEARS' WAR

Although the Seven Years' War broke out over a European dispute, colonial and commercial rivalry dominated the worldwide areas of conflict. At first the French were successful everywhere, until the tide turned in favor of the British under the leadership of William Pitt. Convinced of his own and England's destiny, Pitt's genius steered the nation from peril and his war leadership masterminded a string of impressive victories. Pitt led England from defeat and despair to colonial and naval supremacy but he could not rescue his own political career, because he lacked the political base to hold on to power when the King and Parliament no longer needed him.

## English Defeats

At the outset, the war was an unrelied disaster for Great Britain. In India the British garrison at Calcutta fell to the Indian ruler of Bengal, and all but 23 of 146 prisoners suffocated or were trampled to death in a small cell, infamously termed the "Black Hole." In North America the brilliant French general Montcalm captured Fort Oswego in New York and tightened the encirclement of the English colonies. In the Mediterranean the British lost Minorca when Admiral Byng failed in his mission. The likelihood of a French invasion of England added to the despair when, on the Continent, Hanover fell to French troops. Although Britain's ally, Prussia, won some notable victories in 1756, in the next few years Frederick II could only keep at bay the huge armies of his enemies.

## MINISTERIAL CRISIS

These misfortunes forced the resignation of the Newcastle ministry in 1756. King George reluctantly accepted a Devonshire-Pitt ministry, even though his old prejudices against Pitt—for his attacks on the King's party to Hanover—were as strong as ever. The new ministry labored under

a political disadvantage because it could not win a parliamentary majority. When King George dismissed Pitt in 1757, he was immediately faced with a hostile nation demanding the return of the "Great Commoner." A political coalition between Newcastle and Pitt was arranged, and, for the next four years, Pitt led the Commons and directed the war, while Newcastle provided the parliamentary majority and raised money to fight a world war.

### *The Leadership of William Pitt*

William Pitt, unlike most of his cabinet colleagues, was not born into a politically and socially established family. The Pitt fortune had been made by William's grandfather, "Diamond Pitt," the governor of Madras in India. Pitt entered Parliament through his grandfather's purchase of the rotten borough of Old Sarum. The young Pitt soon made himself known by his impassioned oratory and attacks on Walpole's government and the King's Hanoverian interests. In 1746 the Pelhams brought Pitt into the cabinet where he won a popular following and a reputation of incorruptibility by refusing to use his position as Paymaster of the Forces to indulge in the usual plundering of public funds. When Newcastle did not give him a major post, Pitt resigned in 1755 and assailed the government's failed war policies with telling effect. A year later Pitt was finally in the position he wanted—minister in charge of the war.

As war leader, Pitt increased the subsidies to Frederick II and strengthened the Hanoverian army in order to keep France occupied on the Continent. Meanwhile he pursued his primary aim—the crushing of France's navy and trade by the use of superior sea power. The British navy and army were reorganized, and young, able commanders, like James Wolfe and William Howe, were placed in charge of expeditions. A new enthusiasm and energy infected the whole nation.

Pitt was not a political operator, like Walpole, adroit in the handling of people. Pitt worked alone. He was proud, impatient, egotistical, with marvelous oratorical powers. His greatness was in his rare ability to translate his own patriotism and vision for Britain into the nation's belief in its destiny. Such a wide-ranging yet erratic genius, who disregarded normal political conventions, did not win lasting political support; nevertheless, he was the right leader to mobilize Britain in a time of crisis. Two hundred years later, in World War II, Winston Churchill would be called on by the nation in somewhat similar circumstances.

### THE TIDE OF VICTORY

Almost immediately major English victories occurred on land and sea so that by 1759 Horace Walpole could write, "One is forced to ask every morning what victory there is, for fear of missing one."\* In North America Louisburg, Frontenac, and Duquesne fell to the British. General James Wolfe commanded the British expedition in 1759 against Quebec and defeated the French under Montcalm on the Plains of Abraham, the decisive battle to determine the destiny of Canada. A year later Montreal and all Canada became British.

In India Clive won a major victory at Plassey. By 1761 the French fleet was driven away and Pondicherry surrendered, virtually ending the French empire in India. On the seas, the navy captured Guadeloupe in the West Indies and Dakar on the west coast of Africa. In 1759 Admiral Boscawen demolished one French fleet off Lagos, and a second fleet was decisively beaten at Quiberon Bay by Admiral Hawke. As a result the French troops at Le Havre preparing for an invasion of England were left stranded. Not since Marlborough's campaigns had the British been so overwhelmingly victorious over the French.

### PITT'S DECLINE

Pitt and his supporters in London believed that trade was wealth (and power) and, therefore, that the war should continue until France was stripped of her commercial empire. However, opposition arguments grew louder after 1760. Some opponents lamented the increasing cost of the war, others were jealous of the prestige and power Pitt had acquired as war minister. Foremost among his critics was the newlycrowned King George III who disliked his grandfather's ministers, especially one who overshadowed the King in power. Consequently, King George supported the opponents of Pitt. When Pitt's cabinet colleagues refused to support him in a declaration of war against Spain in 1761, Pitt resigned; Newcastle followed. The cabinet, headed by Lord Bute, ended up declaring war against Spain anyhow after it became evident that Spain was about to declare war against Great Britain. In 1762 Havana and Manila were taken from Spain. In the same year Russia withdrew from the war, and King Frederick regained the Prussian territory which Russia and Austria had occupied. Lord Bute quickly began negotiations for peace with France.

\* *Letters* (16 volumes; Oxford, 1903–1905), IV, p. 330.

PEACE OF PARIS, 1763

The peace settlement left Prussia one of the major powers in Europe. Pitt and London merchants condemned the peace because it failed to follow his grand design of utterly destroying the French trading empire. Even so, Great Britain retained most of its conquests including: (1) Canada, Cape Breton, and undisputed possession of the territory east of the Mississippi; (2) Florida, in exchange for the return of Havana to Spain; (3) all but four of the islands captured from France in the West Indies; (4) the slave port of Senegal in Africa; (5) the recovery of Minorca; and (6) several French trading factories in India.

The seven decades after the Glorious Revolution were largely dominated by four major wars in the extended duel for influence between Britain and France and in Britain's successful efforts to checkmate the domination of Europe by France.

The Seven Years' War and the Peace of Paris settled the century-old English and French rivalry for control of North America, paved the way for British rule in India, bankrupted France, and destroyed her navy. In 1763 Britain was the foremost naval and colonial power in the world. Within Britain, in contrast to the previous century, the political and religious settlements were never seriously challenged. The practice of limited monarchy and the influence of the House of Commons and of the cabinet both advanced during the reigns of the first two Georges.

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14

Colonial Policies and the American Revolution

1760 George III begins sixty-year reign  
1765 Stamp Act, passed by the British Parliament to raise tax revenue for imperial defense, protested in the thirteen colonies  
1770-1782 Lord North serves as Prime Minister during the revolt of the American colonies  
1774 Continental Congress meets in Philadelphia to protest British colonial acts  
1775 Edmund Burke publishes *On Reconciliation with America*  
1776 American independence declared by Continental Congress  
Publication of *Wealth of Nations* on free trade by Adam Smith  
1777 American victory at Saratoga is the turning point in the war  
1781 Lord Cornwallis and the British army surrender to the French and American forces at Yorktown  
1782 Repeal of Poyning's Law in Ireland  
1783 Treaty of Versailles and Treaty of Paris end war with France, Spain and thirteen colonies

Within twenty years of the Peace of Paris which marked the apex of the First British Empire, Britain was once again in Paris relinquishing the crown jewels of its empire, the thirteen colonies. Britain blundered into war



through failure to remodel her imperial policies to satisfy the growing independence of the American colonies.

Colonial problems were further complicated by the political sparring which was occurring in Britain. The outcome was a constant turnover in cabinet membership and leadership and a lack of continuity or coherence in handling the colonies at a critical time.

At first, the declining influence of the Whigs was encouraged by George III since it permitted him more personal power. However, the loss of the colonies and the government's failed imperial policy ended the Lord North ministry and the King's attempt at personal government.

## GEORGE III AND THE POLITICIANS

George III had a loftier and more active concept of kingship than his grandfather, George II, although he never aimed at more than constitutional conventions allowed him. Given the chronic bickering of the Whig factions, there seemed some justification for making cabinet ministers the "king's servants" in fact and for seeking to rule above political factions. During the 1760s the young King endured and contributed to cabinets in a state of flux, but his own vision of government was too narrow to offer a more effective system of administration. Certainly the Whig legend of George III as a dominating tyrant seeking to thwart Parliament by unconstitutional conduct is patently overdrawn. His system of personal government was unsatisfactory largely because it was unsuccessful and failed to deter political factions.

## *The New King*

George III was the first of the Hanoverians to be English born. His youth, piety, and seriousness made him popular at first, until other traits of character became evident, such as his obstinateness and narrowmindedness. The King held exalted ideas of the royal prerogative and he was determined to exercise dominant royal powers, such as the right to dispense patronage. His stubborn sense of duty and recurring attacks of mental illness made cooperation between himself and his cabinets exceedingly difficult, and eventually his popularity faded. The loss of the American colonies was hardly his fault alone, but he received more blame on both sides of the Atlantic than he actually deserved.

## GEORGE III AND THE WHIGS

By 1760, when George came to the throne, Whig rule was disintegrating. This was a development that George III encouraged since he disliked his grandfather's ministers and especially "indispensable" figures such as Pitt.

From 1760 to 1770 there were seven prime ministers and, as a result, an obvious lack of continuity and coherence of policy in handling the colonies at a most critical time.

**Lord Bute, 1762-1763.** After the resignation of Pitt in 1761, Lord Bute, the King's mentor, arranged the ouster of Newcastle and became Prime Minister. Bute led the cabinet until he had pushed the peace treaty through Parliament by exercising the patronage of the Crown to replace Newcastle's appointments. However, Parliament disliked Bute because he was a royal favorite and an outsider, a Scotsman. King George reluctantly accepted his resignation.

**George Grenville, 1763-1765.** George Grenville, Pitt's brother-in-law, obtained a parliamentary majority by allying himself with the Duke of Bedford and the Duke's unprincipled parliamentary clique, the Bloomsbury gang. Grenville was an efficient administrator though he was never liked by the King. In 1765 George III dismissed the cabinet to show his displeasure over the passage of a regency bill that would make his eldest son regent if the King became incapacitated.

**Rockingham, 1765-1766.** To rid himself of Grenville, the King turned to the "Old Whig" faction and the Marquess of Rockingham. The new cabinet repealed Grenville's Stamp Act, but Rockingham could not maintain Whig unity in Parliament, especially after Pitt refused to support the cabinet. Within a year Rockingham was forced to resign.

**Pitt's Coalition Cabinet, 1766-1768.** Pitt, who had accepted a peerage, was now known as the Earl of Chatham. His return to the cabinet was a miserable failure. Suffering with gout and from mental disorders, he was unable to coordinate policies or control his colleagues, each of whom went his own way. Pitt, who had been habitually snappish and arrogant, became increasingly uncooperative, yet nothing except a strong leadership could have held the diverse elements of the nonparty cabinet together. When Pitt failed to recover from a mental breakdown, the Duke of Grafton replaced him as Prime Minister.

**The Grafton Government, 1768-1770.** The cabinet remained divided under the Duke of Grafton's ineffectual leadership. Colonial policies continued to drift although a new cabinet post, Secretary of State for the Colonies, was created. By this time, not only the King but also many members of Parliament were restive with the reviving Whig ministries.

**Lord North, 1770-1782.** George III finally found a suitable manager of the House of Commons in Lord North. As Prime Minister, North used tact and royal patronage to hold a majority for twelve years, with the support of the Tories and the King's Friends not affiliated with Whig cliques. George found North and his cabinet acquiescent. Through patronage George won personal supporters in the Commons (the King's Friends) who looked to the King for pensions and jobs. Where possible North avoided controversial



policies and gave stability to the administration. However, he was more successful as a peace minister than in waging war.

### **John Wilkes and Radicalism**

King George resented the literary critics of his peace negotiations (1762-1763) with France and singled out John Wilkes, a member of Parliament, to serve as an object lesson. Prime Minister Grenville issued a general warrant for the arrest of everyone connected with the publication of the *North Briton*, issue No. 45, in which Wilkes had sharply assailed the ministerial policy reflected in the King's speech to Parliament. In the ensuing court squabble over the legality of general warrants, Wilkes claimed the privilege of immunity as a member of Parliament and fled to France after his release from prison. However, the House of Commons formally expelled Wilkes for his seditious libel and the cabinet outlawed him for refusing to stand trial.

Such highhanded action united the London mob and parliamentary opposition to make a constitutional test case out of the Wilkes affair and to defy the King. The "Wilkes and Liberty" agitation harassed the government until 1769, when Wilkes was ejected from the House for the fourth time after his fourth reelection by the independent-minded electorate of Middlesex County. Not until 1774 was he allowed to take his seat. Thus Wilkes, a disputable drunkard, rather ironically became the hero of the mob and the rallying point for radicalism which would lead ultimately to parliamentary reform. English radicalism which stemmed from this episode learned well the techniques of mob psychology and pamphlet warfare. These methods were quickly copied by the American colonists when they, in turn, were coerced by the British government.

## **COLONIAL POLICIES, 1763-1775**

With a brooding France and a restless Ireland as neighbors, along with radical agitation and cabinet instability at home, Britain was much too occupied to give serious attention to any new policy for the old and trusted thirteen colonies in America. The British government was unaware that the colonies were outgrowing their dependency on Britain for survival or success. During these years the British cabinet lacked any imaginative, or even coherent, policy; cabinet policy seemed to be largely one of doing too little too late. As a result Britain blundered into a deteriorating relationship with the American colonies during these years which was neither anticipated nor planned.

The acquisition of huge new territories in the Seven Years' War demanded immediate attention with regard to boundaries and to relations with the French and Indian inhabitants. The recent war had also revealed the casual and inefficient administration of the empire and the need to coordinate imperial policy. Yet such coordination was impossible without a central authority with power to establish and administer colonial policy. With at least six separate central agencies, ranging from the Board of Trade to the Admiralty Courts, responsible for colonial administration, it was easy to avoid the burden of responsibility or to handle only one facet of a larger problem in the colonies.

### **Imperial Problems in 1763**

#### **ACTS OF TRADE**

The mercantilist laws prohibiting trade between a colony and a foreign territory were never severely enforced by the British or their customs officials, until the Seven Years' War revealed how heavy traffic was between the colonies and the French West Indies. In 1760 when Pitt tried to enforce previous acts of trade, such as the Molasses Act (1733), colonial merchants in New York and Massachusetts stoutly resisted this invasion of their lucrative, though illicit, trade.

#### **IMPERIAL DEFENSE**

The separate colonies were usually unreliable in supplying either troops or supplies when the empire was at war or even when a neighboring colony was attacked by Indians. And yet some type of imperial defense was necessary to control the interior and to keep peace between the colonists and the Indians, especially after Chief Pontiac's uprising in 1763. The British determined that a standing army of ten thousand was necessary for colonial security, when the end of French encroachment made the colonists claim they no longer needed Redcoats for protection.

#### **COLONIAL TAXATION**

The expenses of the French and Indian War and the continued maintenance of troops in America drained the British Treasury. Because the colonists derived major benefit from British protection, they were asked to contribute one-third of the cost of the standing army; the British taxpayer would pay two-thirds and the entire cost of naval defense. The type of taxation attempted by English ministries to raise these revenues and the larger issue of their right to tax the colonists united the colonists for the first time in a common protest against the mother country's parliamentary practices.

### Colonial Acts, 1763-1774

The thirteen taxation acts passed by Parliament in eleven years were protested by the Continental Congress in 1774. Apart from trade regulations, colonial laws had previously originated in the local assemblies. Now Parliament legislated directly for the colonists in an effort to raise revenue, a legal right which the British Parliament undoubtedly possessed, but which appeared arbitrary to the colonists who had enjoyed practical independence for so long. There was no tyrannical intent in the British policy. Most British statesmen, including such friends of the American colonies as Pitt and Burke, believed that Britain had the right to tax the colonies. The slogan of "no taxation without representation" made little constitutional sense to the English when only one out of ten adult males in England had the vote, but all were taxed. Furthermore, the British system of representation was based on interests, such as land, commerce, or the church, not on population; therefore, all subjects, wherever they resided, were considered represented in Parliament. The British Parliament and taxpayers disregarded the intensity of the colonial feeling; the American colonists refused to accept the supremacy of the British Parliament.

### STAMP ACT, 1765

Grenville renewed the Sugar Act in 1764 while cutting the duty by one-half to reduce smuggling and raise revenue. The next year Parliament passed his Stamp Act which would raise £100,000 a year for imperial defense. The tax was already in operation in Britain, and although colonial opinion had been consulted before its passage, the act nevertheless provoked a stormy protest in the colonies. A boycott of British goods ensued, and a Stamp Act Congress condemned the levying of an internal tax. The Rockingham government repealed the act in 1766 because it was unenforceable in the colonies and because British merchants protested the loss of trade. The cabinet accompanied the repeal with a declaratory act, however, asserting the right of Parliament to tax the colonies.

### THE TOWNSHEND DUTIES

In 1767 Charles Townshend, chancellor of the exchequer, skirted the colonists' opposition to an internal tax and imposed instead duties on lead, glass, paint, paper, and tea imported into the colonies. Again the colonists resisted a revenue tax. In 1770 Lord North's cabinet repealed all duties except that on tea which was retained as an assertion of parliamentary authority. The Americans refrained from purchasing imported tea, and in 1773 a group in Boston dramatized their feeling against the tax by dumping cargoes of tea into the harbor. This act shifted England's vacillating policy of resoluteness and conciliation to one of coercion.

### COERCIVE ACTS

Parliamentary legislation in 1774 closed the port of Boston, arranged for the quartering of British troops in America, strengthened royal authority in the administration of Massachusetts, and stipulated that persons accused of capital offenses could be removed from Massachusetts for trial. The Quebec Act, which was included in the colonists' list of intolerable acts, gave Quebec control over the region of the Great Lakes and offered recognition to the Roman Catholic Church in Quebec. In reality, it was a pragmatic and liberal decree which Canadians hailed as the "Magna Charta" of their civil liberties. It not only allowed the French to keep their civil law and their religion, but it also recognized the futility of efforts to Anglicize and assimilate French Canada as a "fourteenth colony."

### AMERICAN UNITY

A unique result of the friction between the colonies and Britain was the degree of cooperation achieved among the formerly disunited colonies. Committees of correspondence were set up in each colony which permitted an isolated grievance to become a common grievance, and well-organized protest societies, such as the Sons of Liberty, fanned the increasing discontent. The events of 1774 strengthened the influence of a vociferous radical element in the colonies and resulted in a Continental Congress in Philadelphia, which challenged the authority of Parliament and demanded the withdrawal of British troops. In 1775, when the British countered with a search of the Boston countryside, military conflict began at Lexington. In the following year, the Continental Congress declared the colonies independent and functioned as the *de facto* government for most of the war.

### BRITISH DISUNITY

If friction with England unified the colonies, it had the opposite effect on English cabinets. All through this period cabinet opinion on colonial policy was confused and divided. Token gestures at colonial planning were made in 1768 with the creation of the post of Secretary of State for Colonial Affairs; however, the ministers appointed to the post were utterly incompetent. On numerous occasions the cabinet split on policy according to the parochial outlook of their personal feelings. Chatham and Burke suggested the possibility of self-governing dominion roles for the colonies, but not enough Englishmen had such sufficiently broad vision, and their ideas received no encouragement from the King. Lord North's and Edmund Burke's efforts at conciliation in 1775 were too late. By that time the majority of leaders on both sides of the Atlantic were ready to decide the issue by force of arms.

## THE AMERICAN WAR OF INDEPENDENCE, 1775-1781

In November 1774, King George declared that England must either master the colonies or leave them totally to themselves. The English attempted the first alternative, but the outcome of the war forced them to accept the second. The conflict, which began as a civil war within the empire, with divided opinion on both sides of the Atlantic, changed its complexion after 1778 and became a world war with Britain fighting alone against an increasing number of European powers. In 1781 the British army surrendered to the French and American forces at Yorktown, and American independence was established.

### The Military Ledger

The American colonists declared war on the most formidable naval and industrial power in the world: a nation with a professional army which controlled both flanks of the colonies (Canada and Florida), and which had the support of Indian allies. Furthermore, the Americans had no adequate central government to coordinate activities; they lacked money and supplies to sustain a long war, and had only an untrained and unreliable local militia. However, the British were fighting a war three thousand miles away from home under the incompetent leadership of the King's Friends. Often British military orders were obsolete by the time they reached America.

Neither side had brilliant military leaders, but George Washington, commander of the colonial army, grasped a critical factor: that if his army could only endure in the field, time was on their side, and the British would grow weary of trying to subdue such a vast country. Simply defeating the Americans in battle, as they often did, would not enable the British to occupy the interior without vastly larger forces.

Unlike previous wars, England had no ally on the Continent, and such isolation encouraged a European coalition against her. Certainly the value of the French alliance to the American cause can hardly be overestimated. Throughout the war, the Whigs, under the leadership of Pitt, Burke, Charles James Fox, Rockingham, and Shelbourn, denounced the war as the King's fault. In the colonies only a minority were active "patriots," and perhaps a quarter of the colonists—known as "Loyalists" or "Tories"—supported the British in the war. Thus the initial conflict was essentially a civil war within the empire rather than a clear clash between Britain and the thirteen colonies.

### Conduct of the War

In the beginning of hostilities, English opinion was favorable toward the policy of coercion against the troublesome colonies. King George determined war policy but lacked the ability to plan effective strategy; nor was he aided by his administrators. Lord North was a reluctant and fretful Prime

### Course of the War

Minister. Similarly, Lord Sandwich, in charge of the navy, and Lord George Germaine, Secretary of State for the Colonies, sadly lacked talent and the respect of the armed services. A naval blockade would have been the wisest policy to pursue because it would not have embittered the colonists as did the army of occupation; nor would it have required such a large number of troops. But blockades were slow in their effects, whereas a territorial war might produce a decisive battle. Besides, the seemingly insurmountable difficulties of the colonists made it unlikely that they could maintain any concerted opposition: colonial paper money was worthless; their army was weak; and colonists loyal to the King would probably aid the British in halting the rebellion. A land war was ordered regardless of the logistics of supplying armies in occupied territory.

The British pursued a half-hearted naval war which was inadequate in conception, while they attempted a territorial war in which they overextended themselves. After 1778 the Colonial war became a minor theater when France threatened to invade England.

### CAMPAIGNS, 1775-1778

The colonists forced General Gage and the British army to evacuate Boston in the spring of 1776, though the American effort to conquer Canada that winter was repulsed. The following summer General Howe defeated Washington on Long Island and made New York the principal British base thereafter. Howe failed to pursue the retreating colonials, and Washington's dwindling army rallied during the winter with two victories, Trenton and Princeton. In 1777 British strategy planned to split the colonies by winning control of the Hudson River-Lake Champlain route. General Burgoyne and his army moved down from Canada to join Howe's forces moving up the Hudson. Instead, Howe captured Philadelphia and dallied in the city, leaving Burgoyne at the mercy of growing numbers of colonial forces who forced him to surrender at Saratoga in October. Saratoga became the turning point in the war because it demonstrated to France the prospect of the colonists defeating the British, and because it resulted in foreign alliances which were crucial to American success. The battle also revived American patriotism and turned English opinion against the war effort in the colonies.

### WORLD WAR, 1778-1781

The French alliance in February 1778 furnished the colonists with the essential elements they lacked—sea power, money, munitions, and a professional army. The war took on a different character when the British Isles became vulnerable to attack as well as the widely scattered British empire. Spain joined France in 1779, and Holland entered the war against England the following year. In 1780 the League of Armed Neutrality (led by Russia

and including Sweden, Denmark, and later Holland and Prussia) was organized to resist the British claim of the right of search of neutral vessels on the high seas.

For once England failed to enjoy naval superiority. The French had built up a new navy which, when allied with the Spanish, outnumbered the British fleet. The British lost Minorca, most of Florida, two islands in the West Indies, posts on the African coast, and barely withstood a massive siege of Gibraltar. In 1779 the two Bourbon fleets entered the Channel and were prevented only by technical errors from landing forty thousand Frenchmen on England's shores. The threat of invasion kept seventy thousand troops guarding England, leaving few reinforcements for the British army in the colonies.

In America Henry Clinton replaced Howe as commander, and after Saratoga the land war moved to the southern colonies. Clinton and Cornwallis won most of the battles but could not control the interior. In the summer of 1781, Lord Cornwallis moved from the Carolinas to Yorktown, Virginia, where supplies could reach him by sea. This avenue of relief was cut off in September when the French navy under Admiral de Grasse won the crucial Battle of Chesapeake Bay. This forced Cornwallis to surrender six weeks later to a combined French and American army more than twice the size of the British forces. The surrender virtually assured the independence of the United States.

## POLITICS AND THE PEACE SETTLEMENT

Defeat abroad forced the downfall of the personal rule of George III. When the Whigs returned to office, they quarreled with the King and among themselves, thereby blunting the prospects of parliamentary reform which growing discontent within and without Parliament was now demanding. In Paris, Whig negotiators offered generous terms to the Americans in order to restore friendly trade relations between the two countries and to reduce the influence of France on the new nation.

### *Fall of the King's Friends*

The British defeat at Yorktown brought about the disintegration of Lord North's administration. Early in 1782 the opposition carried a motion to halt the war in America. Lord North recognized that the King's imperial policy had failed and that royal manipulation of Parliament had been repudiated. King George reluctantly accepted North's resignation when he, too, realized that the whole system of government by which North maintained influence in Parliament was in disrepute. For the next two years political instability plagued the country and the King. The King had to find a new Prime Minister

### *Agitation for Reform*

The American war accelerated the demand for reform of the corrupt parliamentary system. In 1776 John Wilkes had introduced into the Commons a comprehensive measure for parliamentary reform. In the same year Adam Smith and Jeremy Bentham published arguments indicating the economic and institutional premises of English life. The Whigs, in political opposition during the war, seized on reform to blame the failed war on the Tories and the King; they introduced bills to reduce the influence and patronage of the King. In 1780 the Commons adopted John Dunning's motion that "the influence of the Crown has increased, is increasing, and ought to be diminished." The Gordon riots that terrorized London for five days in 1780 were, on the surface, a manifestation of Protestant animosity to the proposed reduction of penal laws against Catholics. However, the savage rioting mirrored a deep discontent in the working classes and indicated to many members the need for constitutional reform rather than harsh repression.

In public meetings in towns across England petitions for reform were sent to Parliament. The Rockingham Whigs translated this reform agitation into parliamentary legislation in a cautious effort to reduce royal patronage and to make Parliament more representative of the nation. Edmund Burke and Charles Fox were two of the more eloquent orators for reform. When the Rockingham Whigs came to power in 1782, they passed two Economical Reform Bills which reorganized the royal household, limited royal influence by barring government contractors from sitting in Parliament, and disenfranchised a large number of government officials. The bill for parliamentary reapportionment failed to win a favorable vote; nevertheless, the influence of the King had been checked, and a movement for reform was under way.

### WHIG FACTIONALISM

Complying with George III's request, Rockingham formed a Whig cabinet after Lord North resigned. Two powerful colleagues in his cabinet, the Earl of Shelbourne and Charles James Fox, disliked each other and soon quarreled openly, splitting the Whigs into two jealous factions. Lord Shelbourne was a friend of Adam Smith, Jeremy Bentham, and Benjamin Franklin, and a brilliant, shrewd critic of Britain's economic and political institutions; he was the heir to Chatham (Pitt the Elder) and won the support of Pitt's son (the Younger). His rival, Charles James Fox, was the most influential and eloquent supporter of political liberty in the House of Commons. Fox's great-hearted and engaging disposition won him a loyal following in spite of his gambling



habits and notorious private life. The dispute between these two Whig leaders came to a head over their respective authority in controlling peace negotiations in Paris with France and the colonies. Fox refused to serve in Shelbourne's ministry upon the death of Rockingham in 1782. Instead he joined with his old enemy North in an effort to defeat the peace negotiations which Shelbourne had completed.

### Peace Negotiations

A British naval victory in the West Indies (Battle of the Saints) under Admiral Rodney and the successful defense of Gibraltar against the French-Spanish siege somewhat salvaged Britain's position in the peace negotiations with its European enemies. American independence was ceded at the outset. The British representatives encouraged the American peace commissioners, Benjamin Franklin, John Jay, and John Adams, to disregard the instructions of Congress and negotiate a separate peace with Britain rather than take the advice of France as they had been ordered. The French were furious at the generous British terms offered to the Americans; the British were delighted with the discord developing among their opponents.

### TREATIES OF VERSAILLES AND PARIS, SEPTEMBER 1783

In the Treaty of Versailles signed with France and Spain, France recovered the islands of St. Pierre and Miquelon off the coast of Newfoundland, won several trading posts in Africa, and regained its trading posts in India. Spain secured Florida and Minorca, in return for the surrender of the British Bahamas. By the Treaty of Paris, the United States acquired all territory east of the Mississippi and south of the Great Lakes, fishing rights off Newfoundland, and free navigation on the Mississippi. In return, the American Congress recommended that the states restore confiscated Loyalist property; however, the states failed to do this, and the mistreatment of Loyalists continued. Over fifty thousand fled, the majority migrating to Canada.

### END OF THE FIRST BRITISH EMPIRE

The loss of the American colonies marked the end of the First British Empire. The loss of most of the English settlements left an empire which with the exception of Canada was largely tropical. One direct result of the American revolution was the settlement of Australia to replace Georgia as a penal colony. Another result was Lord North's Renunciation Act of 1778 which set up a policy, learned too late for the thirteen colonies, of never again taxing a colony for imperial revenue. The American revolt also reshaped Britain's attitude toward its colonies of settlement; if colonies were like children, then the mission of the parent was to lead them toward political maturity, not to expect an indefinite period of dependency.

**IRISH CONDITIONS**

The American Revolution had immediate repercussions in Ireland. The Irish were struggling for their rights against the restrictions of Poyning's Law which since the reign of Henry VII had prevented a free and equal Irish Parliament. When British troops were withdrawn from Ireland in 1778 to fight in America, regiments of largely Irish Protestant volunteers were raised and encamped outside Dublin, while a convention under the Earl of Charlemont encouraged the Irish Parliament to pass measures granting themselves legislative independence. Under the Rockingham ministry in 1782 Henry Grattan succeeded in procuring the repeal of Poyning's Law. The following year Fox and North passed the Renunciation Act which made the Irish legislature and judiciary independent of the British Parliament; only the Executive was to remain tied to it. A separate and elected Irish government seemed possible in Ireland had not the French Revolution intervened to frustrate such prospects.

After reaching the apex of power in its colonial and commercial empire in 1763 and becoming the world's number-one sea power, Great Britain saw the loss of its "old and trustworthy" thirteen colonies within the next two decades. The First British Empire ended with the Peace of Paris in 1783. The transplanted overseas settlements were growing up and in need of more autonomy than British colonial policy and practices permitted. Britain learned a lesson from the loss of the thirteen colonies that would be wisely applied to the rest of its settlement empire. As a result these colonies will evolve peacefully to self-government and continue by choice in the British Commonwealth. George III failed to find strong or successful leadership for his cabinet until after the Peace of Paris was signed in 1783 and William Pitt the Younger became Prime Minister. The two decades of 1763-1783 saw growing pressure for parliamentary reform and the promise of it until the French Revolution intervened.

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## Britain vs. France: The Era of the French Revolution and the Napoleonic Wars

- 1783 William Pitt the Younger becomes Prime Minister
- 1784 India Act establishes political and commercial arrangement in British India until 1858
- 1788 First settlement of Australia by British
- 1789 Declaration of the Rights of Man by the French National Assembly
- 1793 Start of the wars with revolutionary and Napoleonic France
- 1800 Act of Union abolishes Irish Parliament; representation of Ireland begins in the British Parliament
- 1805 Admiral Nelson defeats the combined French and Spanish fleets at Trafalgar
- 1807 Slave trade abolished by Parliament
- 1812 Napoleon invades Russia
- 1815 United States declares war on Britain, seeking to annex Canada
- Peace Settlement in Europe worked out by the members of the Coalition and France at the Congress of Vienna

### The Problems of Britain in 1783

#### ECONOMIC DISLOCATION

Britain had been humiliated by defeat in the American War of Independence and in 1783 found itself without European allies. Under the stresses of defeat and incompetence, George III's political system and support had collapsed and no stable ministry was likely as rival political factions wrangled for office.

William Pitt, who knew the art of political management far better than his father, dominated the political scene from 1783 until his death in 1806. Unlike his great political opponent, Charles James Fox, Pitt was a pragmatist who moved with the times and became the honored symbol of Britain's traditions and virtues during the war with France. Ambitious, astute, often aloof, he understood and used political channels to win and keep a parliamentary majority, having first assured himself of King George's support. He also understood the changes occurring in commerce and supported Adam Smith's ideas on free trade. Pitt at the age of twenty-five received the prime ministership, because he was acceptable to George III, and because he had the skill of holding the support of the King and winning parliamentary support.

### WILLIAM PITT THE YOUNGER

The telescoping of three revolutions—the American, the French, and Industrial—into a few decades of time demanded adjustments in the structure of English society and government. The landed aristocracy and unrepresentative Parliament could no longer absorb these massive changes, but the movement for reform was diverted by a more immediate crisis, the menace of revolutionary France.

When France threatened Britain in its most sensitive area—control of the Low Countries and the Channel by an unfriendly power—Britain went to war and remained at war for over twenty years. The war with France dominated all domestic issues.

In Britain the fear of French radicalism turned reform into reaction. It also turned Pitt from a peace-loving Prime Minister bent on progressive reform into a war leader, who used sea power to limit Napoleon's grandiose designs and who, with Castlereagh, designed a strategy for a successful peace settlement.

In 1775 Britain was already in the midst of fundamental industrial changes which had begun two centuries earlier with the enclosure (fencing in) of land. Between 1700 and 1760 over three million more acres were

enclosed. In manufactures, the substitution of horsepower for manpower and a series of mechanical inventions (see chapter 16) moved industry from the home to the factory. These developments introduced a new influential class of industrial capitalists who resented being excluded from political power. Adam Smith's doctrine of unrestricted production, free trade, and freedom from governmental regulations (*Wealth of Nations*, 1776) coincided with the expanding capitalistic economy, but was contrary to the mercantilist theory and the legislation in operation.

#### THE EAST INDIA COMPANY

The conquests of Robert Clive in the Seven Years' War had altered the

East India Company from a trading post to a private imperial empire. The transformation brought on strong criticism from Edmund Burke and the Whigs, because the company governed Bengal without any legal responsibility for its actions. Impressive fortunes were made by company officials who levied local taxes through Indian puppets. As corruption and lawlessness increased, the House of Commons investigated the company. Lord North modified the exercise of power with the Regulating Act of 1773, which, nevertheless, left the company with its monopoly. Warren Hastings, the first governor under the Regulating Act, saved, and then extended, the company's position in a prolonged war with native potentates who were backed by the French. Hastings won over his enemies in the field, on his council, and in England, but his methods were often arbitrary and his empire building was expensive and involved major administrative expansion. When Hastings was called home to face impeachment proceedings, the testimony against him forced Parliament to recognize that a drastic alteration in the government of India was essential if Britain was intent on remaining there.

#### THE IRISH PROBLEM

The Renunciation Act of 1783 had provided the Irish Parliament with legislative independence, but no further attempts were made to eliminate the centuries of discrimination and plunder which the conquering English had inflicted upon the Irish. Henry Grattan in Ireland and Pitt in England realized that basic problems, such as absentee landlordship, religious restrictions, and economic discrimination, needed to be solved or the Irish Parliament would be little more than an agency of the English administration which could be bribed.

### Prime Minister Pitt

The defeat of Shelbourne in the Commons in 1783 following the passage of the peace treaties with France and the United States brought a short-lived Portland-Fox-North ministry that the King did his best to oust. He considered North a traitor after he resigned in 1782 and Fox, whose debauchery was a bad influence on the Prince of Wales, the most dangerous of the Whig

leaders. The King successfully exerted personal influence in the House of Lords to block Fox's East India bill. He used the bill's defeat as the excuse to dismiss the ministry and to invite young William Pitt to become Prime Minister.

Pitt was masterful in the art of administration and parliamentary maneuvering. Accepting office in 1783 without a majority in the Commons, he showed the invulnerability of the King's favor by surviving weekly defeats in the Commons at the hands of Fox while whittling away at the Fox-North majority. When the opposition was reduced to a majority of only one, Parliament was dissolved and an election called. Pitt had won the respect of politicians as well as popular sympathy by this remarkable performance in weakening Fox's position in the Commons. In the election of 1784 he was helped by his alliance with William Wilberforce and the financial resources of the Treasury to ensure an electoral victory.

The election gave Pitt a large majority at the expense of his opponents. He carefully cultivated the support of the City of London with honors and titles and favorable commercial policies. In the House of Lords he swamped the Whig majority by having the King create scores of new peers. This marked the end of Whig supremacy and the beginning of a new political alignment which would become increasingly Tory in principle and in personnel. Although the King preferred Pitt to anybody else, he never controlled him as he had North. Under Pitt the powers of the prime ministership were to be expanded.

#### OPPOSITION OF FOX

The decimated Whig opposition under Fox's inspired but erratic leadership had difficulty opposing Pitt's successful reform of the national economy and use of patronage. The French Revolution frightened many Whigs, including Edmund Burke, into leaving Fox's liberal camp and joining Pitt. Only in the years 1787-1788 was Pitt's supremacy threatened when the temporary insanity of George III made a regency appear necessary. Pitt stalled as long as possible in transferring power to the Prince of Wales, because he knew that the Prince, as Regent, would immediately call upon Fox to form a ministry. When the King suddenly regained his sanity, the threat was removed.

#### PITT'S INDIA ACT

After the Lords defeated Fox's East India bill, Pitt offered an acceptable substitute. In 1784 his India Act established a dual control whereby the government accepted responsibility for political and civil affairs, while the company retained control of commerce and patronage. A Board of Control, headed by a secretary of state, assumed responsibility for Indian administration and had the power to remove officials appointed by the company. This

system operated until 1858 and, with the governorships of Charles Cornwallis and Richard Wellesley, efficient government came to India, but at the expense of a moral arrogance which increasingly isolated the ruling British from the Indians and their culture.

#### FINANCIAL REFORMS

Pitt was compelled to reorganize Britain's public finances in his budgets of 1784–1787 since the American war had almost doubled the national debt and jeopardized the credit of the government. The complicated system of collecting taxes was simplified, and taxes were lowered to provide new revenue and eventually a budgetary surplus. Smuggling decreased because lower tariffs no longer made it highly profitable. Pitt also created a Sinking Fund (1786), the interest on which was to be used to pay off the national debt. In three years Pitt had stabilized the country for George III, as Walpole had done for George I. He encouraged as much free trade as the mercantilist interests in England would permit and in 1786 negotiated a reciprocity treaty with France which permitted the mutual reduction of duties on specified imports.

#### FURTHER REFORM ATTEMPTS

Throughout the 1780s Pitt worked for reform in several areas, pressing his proposals where politically prudent and accepting defeat of other measures with equanimity. Only the fear of France made him quietly drop reform and become a protector of the status quo. In 1785 Pitt acknowledged his debt to the reformers by introducing a bill for parliamentary redistribution which would have abolished thirty-five rotten boroughs. The bill was defeated, and Pitt did not risk his political majority in pursuing it further. His efforts to repeal the religious disabilities against Catholics and Dissenters were no more successful than his proposals for parliamentary reform.

Pitt next worked on bills for the abolition of the slave trade. The decision handed down in the Somerset case of 1772 freed slaves in Britain and encouraged reformers in their efforts to ameliorate the horrors of slave trading in the empire. (The question of the legality of slavery in Great Britain and Ireland was decided in the Somerset case by Lord Mansfield's judgment that "as soon as a slave set his foot on the soil of the British islands, he became free.") In 1787 Sierra Leone, West Africa, was established as a haven for emancipated slaves. Pitt's close friend William Wilberforce led the agitation in the House of Commons against the slave trade. At first they met with little success, but did not give up their efforts. In 1807, the year after Pitt's death, the slave trade was abolished by Parliament—the only reform to occur in the war years.

Pitt sought to relieve the worst of the commercial disabilities in Ireland by permitting free trade between Ireland and the colonies in return for Irish revenue to support the navy. The Irish Parliament approved, but commercial interests in England spurned Pitt's efforts and defeated the measure. The Irish realized that they could only win concessions when Britain was threatened by foreign invasion.

#### COLONIAL POLICIES

Over forty thousand Loyalists fled the United States to British North America to escape harassment and to continue their loyalty to the Crown. Some ten thousand arrived in Upper Canada (present-day Ontario), and quickly became restive over the political and religious arrangements of the Quebec Act. In 1791 Quebec was divided into Upper and Lower Canada with each province having religious freedom, its own lieutenant governor, a nominated upper house, and a representative assembly. Thus the Loyalists introduced the English system of government to Canada and to the French Canadians.

While Canada was being reorganized, Australia was being settled. Captain Cook had charted the land in 1769, and in 1788 the first settlement, largely convicts, founded Sydney. Transportation to Australia was preferable to an English prison, and until the year of the Great Reform Bill (1832), the practice was accepted with little question; afterward it was condemned on both humanitarian and utilitarian grounds. All told 166,000 penal offenders were transported to Australia.

#### Foreign Affairs

Pitt had hoped for a period of peace to carry on his administrative reforms, because domestic affairs in the eighties interested him more than foreign affairs. Nevertheless, he proceeded to end England's diplomatic isolation by a Triple Alliance (1788) with Holland and Prussia which sought to halt the extension of French influence in the Netherlands. Pitt then reversed England's traditional policy of friendship to Russia by using the Triple Alliance to protest Russia's designs in the Near East. He urged Parliament to use force to keep Russia from devouring more Turkish territory, but Parliament refused to back him. The French Revolution and its implications for Britain now loomed large. At first Pitt failed to recognize the strength of the revolutionary movement or to believe it could last long. As late as 1792, Pitt was predicting fifteen years of peace. Then France advanced into the Low Countries and threatened the English Channel; the next year (1793) Britain was at war.

## WAR WITH FRANCE

Pitt and most Europeans underestimated the strength and appeal of the French revolutionary movement. After the force of revolutionary nationalism and the appeal of democratic slogans were graphically observed, Britain and Europe were intent not only on defeating France but the revolution as well. Warfare radically changed as the national spirit of France made the whole nation part of the war effort, with citizen armies routing the professional armies of the old regimes. Britain relied on its navy and subsidies to Continental allies to stave off defeat. Its colonial and industrial resources, sea power, and five coalitions created by Britain served in the end to checkmate Napoleon. If the Battle of Waterloo left Britain as the foremost power in the world, it also left the nation with a host of internal problems which the war had not solved but only set aside.

### Revolutionary France

From 1789 to 1791 the National Assembly in France successfully abolished ancient abuses and privileges and expressed its aspirations in the eloquent Declaration of the Rights of Man. The radical changes that were decreed, particularly in the monarchy and in the church, split France into two groups—one accepting, the other rejecting, the revolution. The active revolutionists gained the ascendancy, and the ensuing war against Austria and Prussia consolidated their position. Louis XVI tried to flee the country while the demoralized French army, shorn of most of its officers who were loyal to the old regime, retreated before the Austrian-Prussian armies. The invading forces were halted at Valmy by the French revolutionary army on September 20, 1792. By that time the Jacobin clubs—radical pressure groups led by George Jacques Danton and Maximilian Robespierre, who rejected the monarchy in favor of a republic—controlled Paris.

The "September Massacres" of people suspected of hostility to the revolution mirrored the breakdown of central authority. The National Convention (1792) which replaced the Assembly abolished the monarchy and declared France a republic. The next year Louis XVI was executed, and a Reign of Terror, introduced by the Committee for Public Safety, purged the nation of political opponents. The revolutionary government also put the national economy on a war footing and began a mass conscription. As the French Republican army began a crusade to liberate the Continent, it spread fear and hatred throughout Europe. Republican France was more expansionistic and successful than the monarchy it had overthrown. It defied treaties and annexed Savoy and Belgium.

### Reception of the Revolution in England

English public opinion was sympathetic to the French Revolution, likening it to the Glorious Revolution of 1688. Charles James Fox, Charles Grey, and especially William Wordsworth, the Romantic poet, were enthusiastic about the upheaval in France. Stimulated by the revolution, various societies for the reform of Parliament were revived and new ones established, such as the Society of the Friends of the People and the London Corresponding Society. The latter was founded in 1792 by Thomas Hardy to promote universal suffrage (voting rights) among working-class people. As the excesses of the revolution dampened this early enthusiasm and as France attempted to stir up revolution beyond its borders, the reformers in Britain became suspect as being only one step away from becoming revolutionaries. This changing mood was witnessed in Burke's pamphlet, *Reflections on the Revolution in France*. His lucid warning that the ideas of the French Revolution, if not checked, would destroy overnight the values and order of Western society won an immediate response. Burke's viewpoint appealed to conservatives who were frightened by Thomas Paine's *The Rights of Man*, which advocated the overthrow of monarchical government. Burke and a majority of conservative Whigs joined Pitt, leaving Fox with a small and ineffectual opposition. Pitt, hitherto a reformer, now turned reactionary and repressed all reforms, fearful they would open the door to revolution.

### The First Coalition, 1792-1797

The first years of the war were full of mistakes and failures because Pitt, and most of the leaders in Europe, underestimated the strength of revolutionary France mobilized for total war. When war was declared on February 1, 1793, Pitt at once lined up the First Coalition, which eventually consisted of Austria, Prussia, Great Britain, Sardinia, Spain, Portugal, Naples, and the Papal States. Pitt hoped to imitate his father's policy of subsidizing Continental powers and using sea power to combat France's commercial empire. However, the members of the Coalition were jealous of each other and did little but preserve their respective interests.

The allied powers were at first successful when the French suffered defeat in the Netherlands and desertion by its generals. Pitt agreed to using British troops because victory seemed imminent. Henry Dundas, the incompetent secretary of war, sent British troops to various theaters in an attempt to sever French colonies. In one theater alone, the British lost 40,000 troops in their efforts to subdue the French sugar islands in the West Indies. Under the generalship of Carnot a new French conscript army was organized into a superior fighting force. The allies were severely defeated and British troops were routed from Holland. By 1795 Holland was overrun, and after Prussia and Spain withdrew, only Austria, Russia, and Sardinia remained in the Coalition. Napoleon Bonaparte, the commander of the French armies on the Italian front, demonstrated his military genius with



superb tactics against the Austrians and Sardinians. By 1797 Britain stood alone, its allies beaten by France.

### *Britain in 1797*

Britain's fortunes reached their lowest ebb in 1797. Only a violent storm prevented the French army from landing in Ireland. At Spithead and the Nore two naval mutinies over living conditions, food, and the brutal treatment of sailors lowered British morale, but forced redress of grievances. Within the country, the Bank of England suspended cash payments to stop a run on the bank, food became scarce, and Pitt's peace overtures to France were rebuffed. Before the year was out, however, Britain restored its naval supremacy by two major victories: at Cape St. Vincent the English Mediterranean fleet under the command of Jervis and Nelson routed a Franco-Spanish fleet; at Camperdown the North Sea fleet under Admiral Duncan defeated the Dutch navy.

Because the two naval disasters had prevented France from invading England, Napoleon led a French army against England's commercial empire in the Mediterranean by invading Egypt in 1798 and marching eastward. Admiral Nelson sighted the French supply ships at anchor in Abukir Bay and in a brilliant maneuver (Battle of the Nile) sank the fleet. At Acre (in modern-day Israel), British sailors checked the French army and forced Napoleon to give up his eastern plan. Abandoning his army, Napoleon slipped back to France. There, after being feted as a national hero, he easily unseated the corrupt and incompetent Directory and installed himself as First Consul and virtual dictator. Napoleon's consulate marked the end of the revolutionary decade in France. His immediate plans were to consolidate France's reforms, use the nation as the instrument of his ambition to rule Europe, and eventually become emperor.

To accomplish his aims, Napoleon would have to defeat the Second Coalition (Great Britain, Russia, Austria, Turkey, Naples, and Portugal), which Pitt had arranged after Britain's naval successes in the Mediterranean. While Napoleon was carrying out his campaign in Egypt, the allied forces, rearmed through subsidies obtained by Pitt's new income tax, had recaptured northern Italy. In 1800 Napoleon invaded Italy and quickly crushed the Austrians at Marengo. Another French army defeated a second Austrian army at Hohenlinden. The double disaster forced Austria out of the war. Russia had already dropped out and turned against England by heading the League of Armed Neutrality of Northern Powers (Russia, Prussia, Sweden, and Denmark) to halt England's search of neutral ships for contraband. Lord Nelson, in a finely calculated risk, destroyed the powerful Danish fleet at Copenhagen (1801) and sailed into the Baltic to meet the Russians. Meanwhile Czar Paul had been murdered and the new Czar, Alexander I,

### *British Victory and the Second Coalition*

### *The French Revolution and Ireland*

The French Revolution gave the Irish the opportunity to take advantage of England's extremity, just as the American Revolution had helped their cause a generation earlier. The successful American Revolution, reinforced by the infiltration of radical ideas from France, had encouraged Irish rebellion. Some reforms had recently been granted: Irish Protestants no longer had to submit to the Test Act, and Irish Catholics could lease land for ninety-nine years. However, acts of the Irish Parliament were still subject to veto by the cabinet of Westminster, and the religious and economic grievances remained.

Even before war was declared with France in 1793, the British government had turned against all political reformers, jumping them in the same bracket as revolutionaries. The repression grew heavier as the war dragged on, and for over a quarter of a century all effective opposition to the government was considered seditious. In 1792 a proclamation was issued against all seditious writings; the authors of such works would be subject to prosecution. This was followed by an Aliens Act, a Seditious Meetings Act, a Treasonable Practices Act, and the Combination Acts. Their cumulative effect prevented public meetings without the approval of a magistrate, broadened treason to include writing and speaking as well as acting against the government, and made trade unions illegal. The Habeas Corpus Act was suspended in 1794 and, except for Fox and a dwindling handful of faithful supporters, all opposition to the government was muzzled.

### DOMESTIC REPRESSION

The war ended in a stalemate with France supreme on land and England supreme on the seas, and both countries agreeing to peace. The Treaty of Amiens: (1) formally recognized the new French government; (2) required Britain to withdraw from Malta and restore all conquests except Ceylon and Trinidad; and (3) demanded that France recognize Turkish claims to Egypt and withdraw from Rome and Naples. The treaty was unduly favorable to France since England gave up far more territory, whereas large areas of Europe remained closed to British commerce. Napoleon regarded the peace as only a breather because his ambitions were not yet satisfied. He acquired Louisiana from Spain, reconquered San Domingo, accelerated his program of naval construction, and by act and utterance seemed to have designs on British possessions. The peace was of short duration.

### TREATY OF AMIENS, 1802

wanted peace. The League disintegrated, and the Baltic and the Mediterranean remained open to British ships.



Wolfe Tone, a Belfast lawyer, led the independence movement with his Society of United Irishmen (1791). Other groups followed and several reforms were secured, one of which was an extension of the franchise to Irish Catholics. When Tone asked the French for aid, they responded by attempting to send several expeditions. In 1798 a rebellion broke out in Ireland which the British quickly and cruelly suppressed. These developments convinced Pitt that a new political arrangement for Ireland was imperative.

#### ACT OF UNION, 1800

Only by a legislative union, like the agreement between the Scotch and English Parliaments of 1707, could the British cabinet end the independence of the Irish Parliament. However, the Irish legislature refused to dissolve itself until British gold and peerages were distributed freely and the implicit promise of Catholic emancipation was given. Both Parliaments passed the Act of Union in 1800. Ireland was henceforth represented by thirty-two peers in the House of Lords and one hundred members in the House of Commons. The act also allowed free trade between the two countries, provided for the continuance of the Church of Ireland (Anglican), and abolished the Irish Parliament. To make the union effective and to pacify Ireland, Pitt proceeded with a bill for Catholic emancipation which George III adamantly refused to consider. Because Pitt could not continue without the King's approval, he resigned in 1801, and Viscount Addington became Prime Minister. Thus Britain was deprived of its leading statesman, and Ireland of its promised relief.

#### Renewal of the War

The interval of peace appeared to the British government only to be helping Napoleon prepare for further expansion; therefore Britain declared war in 1803 after just one year of peace. Napoleon made the invasion of England his primary objective, and barges were built to ferry the French army encamped at Boulogne. In the fervor and anxiety of defending the island Addington proved ineffectual, and the nation demanded the return of Pitt. In 1804 Pitt came back to office. Immediately he strengthened British sea power and resurrected another coalition on the Continent.

To safely transport his troops to England, Napoleon had to break British control of the Channel. In October 1805 the combined French and Spanish fleets under Admiral Villeneuve were engaged by Nelson at Cape Trafalgar. Although the British fleet was outnumbered, Nelson's strategy—using a double row of ships to penetrate the enemy line at two places—annihilated the enemy fleets in the last major battle fought under sail. Nelson was killed in the engagement, but his victory kept control of the seas for Britain.

#### The Third Coalition

Using subsidies and diplomacy, Pitt raised a Third Coalition (Great Britain, Russia, Austria, Sweden, and later Prussia) in 1805 to fight Napoleon on land; however, it was no more a match for Napoleon than the previous coalitions. Even before the naval defeat at Trafalgar, Napoleon had turned eastward and defeated the Austrians at Ulm, and in December 1805, Austria was forced out of the war after a crushing defeat at Austerlitz. Prussia entered the war but quickly accepted a humiliating peace after being defeated at Jena in October 1806. After Russia suffered two defeats, Czar Alexander came to terms with Napoleon at Tilsit (1807).

The Russian Emperor allied himself with Napoleon, who was now Emperor of France, and both agreed that Russian influence would be allowed to expand eastward provided that the Czar recognized Napoleon's control of central Europe and supported a boycott on British commerce. After Tilsit Napoleon reached the apex of his power and for the next five years dominated Continental Europe. Only Britain's island location and naval supremacy saved it from the invincible French army.

#### DEATH OF PITT, 1806

On January 2, 1806, only weeks after the Austrian disaster at Austerlitz, Pitt died of overwork at the age of forty-six. His rational approach to problems, his powerful though narrow mind, and his pleasing personal character and administrative abilities did much to enhance the post of prime minister. Such a statesman could not easily be replaced in the war against Napoleon.

#### The Continental System

Napoleon devised a method whereby he hoped to crush Britain without invasion: all Europe was to be closed to British trade. Without sea power Napoleon could not attack Britain or her colonies, but he hoped to ruin its commerce and break the "nation of shopkeepers" with an embargo. To that end he issued the Berlin Decree in December 1806, to blockade the British Isles. The decree forbade neutrals under French influence from trading with Britain, and declared merchandise exported from British ports lawful prizes for any nation. The British government countered with its own order in council forbidding neutrals, under penalty of forfeiting ships and cargoes, to trade with France or her allies or to observe the Berlin Decree. Additional decrees and orders in council followed in 1807.

If either side had fully enforced the decrees the resulting economic warfare may well have destroyed European commerce. However, each side protected its own trade, and Napoleon made no effort to police exports from the Continent, only imports. Even this was difficult because it demanded a detection system which Napoleon lacked, and a self-sacrifice which satellite nations were not inclined to make. Smuggling developed to unheard-of proportions as resentment arose against the tyranny of the system. Finally,

the nationalism which Napoleon had exploited in his own conquests back-fired and became a weapon the conquered countries used in opposing French imperialism. The Continental System became essentially a paper blockade.

#### PENINSULAR CAMPAIGNS

To enforce his Continental System, Napoleon attempted to bring Portugal and Spain more completely under his control. After occupying Por-

tugal and deposing the Bourbon King of Spain, Napoleon placed his brother, Joseph, on the throne. This provoked the Spanish popular uprising of 1808 and an invitation to Britain to intervene. Under Sir John Moore (who was killed in 1809) and Sir Arthur Wellesley (later the Duke of Wellington), the British forces gradually liberated Portugal; they then coordinated their strategy with the guerrilla warfare of the Spanish peasants to restrain the operations of 300,000 French troops by hit-and-run tactics. Under Wellesley's superb generalship the British made an orderly retreat when faced with overwhelming odds, attacked the overextended supply lines of the French, and in 1812 took the offensive to drive the Bonaparte government out of Spain.

#### *Downfall of Napoleon*

The uneasy alliance between Napoleon and Alexander I collapsed as each became suspicious of the other's motives. When the Czar violated the Continental System and accepted British goods, Napoleon invaded Russia in 1812, but the Russians refused to surrender. Since winter was fast approaching and the French army was without provisions, Napoleon ordered a retreat that became a nightmarish disaster. The freezing weather, starvation, and the Cossack attacks permitted only a remnant to reach France safely. Meanwhile Britain's foreign secretary, Castlereagh, was forging a Fourth Coalition (1812-1814). Russia, Prussia, Austria, Great Britain, and many lesser powers combined to take advantage of Napoleon's misfortunes in Spain and Russia. At Leipzig in 1813 the allied armies inflicted the first crushing defeat on the army of Napoleon. In the following year they entered Paris, exiled Napoleon (Treaty of Fontainebleau) to the island of Elba in the Mediterranean, and placed Louis XVIII, brother of Louis XVI, on the French throne. The allied powers then gathered at Vienna to negotiate the remaining problems.

#### BATTLE OF WATERLOO

While the victorious delegates were still quarreling over terms, Napoleon escaped from Elba, made a triumphant entry into Paris, and reoccupied the throne. Wellington and Castlereagh organized yet a Fifth Coalition to confront once again their common enemy in the field. Napoleon's Hundred Days ended with the climactic Battle of Waterloo.

#### *Causes of the War of 1812*

Fought near Brussels on June 11, 1815, Wellington and Napoleon duelled for supremacy, but successive charges of French cavalry failed to break the British squares. Before nightfall, General Blucher and the Prussian army arrived to reinforce the British and rout the French. Napoleon surrendered to the British and was banished to St. Helena, where he lived out the remaining six years of his life. The diplomats returned to Vienna to complete the peace settlement.

While the British army was fighting Napoleon, the United States declared war on Britain for the purpose of annexing Canada and protesting Britain's violation of the maritime rights of neutrals at sea. The United States gained none of the objects for which the war was fought. To Britain the war was only a sideshow, completely overshadowed by the peninsular war in Spain and Napoleon's invasion of Russia.

When the Anglo-French war broke out in 1793, American sentiment favored an alliance with the French, but President Washington immediately declared the neutrality of the United States. American neutral ships did a lively business with both France and England during the war, and American commerce prospered until the Napoleonic decrees and Britain's orders in council caught the ships in a crossfire of the belligerents' regulations. Because British sea power enabled it to exercise the right of search more effectively than France, American resentment was directed largely against Britain. Although Congress declared war on the ostensible grounds of the violation of maritime rights, there were other reasons as well: (1) The sectional ambitions of the south and the west urged expansion into Florida and Canada. These rich lands could easily be annexed, because Spain and England were concentrating all their available forces in the European war; by 1812 only four thousand British troops remained in Canada. (2) The Indian problem was aggravated when Chief Tecumseh, aided by Canadian supplies, established an Indian Confederacy to prevent the encroachment of white settlers. (3) American nationalism was intensified by the War Hawks in Congress who believed that the United States should control the continent. (4) Anti-English sentiment developed from the aftermath of the American Revolution, Jay's unsatisfactory Treaty of 1794, and the exclusion of American commerce from the West Indies trade.

#### COURSE OF THE WAR AND THE TREATY OF GHENT

On land the poorly prepared efforts to conquer Canada failed as the invaders were repulsed in a series of small, but bitter, attacks in which both the British commander, Sir Isaac Brock, and the Indian chief, Tecumseh, were killed. When the war in Spain progressed favorably, Britain sent seasoned troops from the Peninsula to America. In 1814 one army captured Washington and burned it in retaliation for the American burning of York

(present-day Toronto). A second army was defeated by Andrew Jackson at New Orleans two weeks after the peace had been made. Admiral Perry's naval victory gained control of Lake Erie for the Americans. On the Atlantic, American privateers and lone raiders damaged British shipping and pride before the British blockade effectively restrained American commerce.

The Treaty of Ghent (December 1814) provided for a restoration of territories as they were before the war. Nothing was mentioned about the original causes of the war, except that disputes over boundaries and fisheries were to be turned over to the arbitral adjudication of joint commissions. This procedure brought lasting peace between Canada and the United States. Fishing and boundary disputes were peacefully resolved by 1818, and the Rush-Bagot Agreement (1817) brought complete naval disarmament to the Great Lakes. The war put an end to Tecumseh's Indian Confederacy and to all efforts of the United States to annex Canada by force. For Canadians, the anti-American sentiment engendered by the war became the precursor of future Canadian nationalism.

### **British Politics after 1806**

When Pitt died in 1806, George II reluctantly accepted a coalition cabinet led by Lord Grenville with Fox as foreign secretary. Fox put through the bill for the abolition of the slave trade before he died the same year (1807). His Whig colleagues were forced to resign that year because of parliamentary and royal displeasure over their attempt to remove restrictions preventing Catholics from holding military commissions. For a short span a Tory cabinet was assembled under the Duke of Portland, and in 1809 Spencer Perceval became Prime Minister. He prosecuted the war vigorously until his assassination in 1812. His successor was Lord Liverpool, who was astute, but indolent by nature, thereby letting his cabinet colleagues lead in their areas of responsibility. The most able and influential of Liverpool's cabinet was Lord Castlereagh who did little to oppose the reactionary views of his colleagues, but whose sound judgment and successful performance in conducting the peace negotiations won him the respect of Parliament and of Europe.

The long tenure of Liverpool's government (1812-1827) was aided by a rivalry among Whig leaders and a liberal-conservative split in their ranks, with the conservative faction supporting the government in its suppression of reform. Prosecution of critics of the government continued in the closing years of the war. Sir Francis Burdett, leader of a small group in Parliament who were called "Radicals," and William Cobbett, publisher of *Cobbett's Weekly Register*, were imprisoned for their opinions on reform.

Britain's industrial revolution gave it an edge over France in the economic competition of the war years. British commerce expanded significantly, but wealth was not evenly distributed. The poor suffered greatly

## **THE PEACE SETTLEMENT**

because prices rose faster than wages, food was scarce, and because the government legislated against labor agitation yet refused to remedy the causes of distress. The wildly fluctuating law of supply and demand caused periodic booms and busts. Thus when manufacturers found a sudden change in demand for products, they were forced to lay off workers. During the depression of 1811-1813 the misery of the poor produced the Luddite riots, during which unemployed workers went through three counties smashing the new machines of the textile industry that had put them out of work. The government had no answer for the grievances of the poor other than repression.

Five coalitions had been forged to contain France and finally, after a generation of warfare, Napoleon was defeated and the allied powers gathered to arrange the peace. Coalitions are usually formed in a time of danger against *someone*, not for *something*; but often when the threat is removed, solidarity collapses and old rivalries return. The Congress of Vienna was no exception. The final settlement, which came about after months of maneuvering and compromises, did not completely satisfy any of the powers; yet it met the minimum requirements of each for security and preserved the balance of power until 1871.

### **Pitt's Proposals**

As early as 1804 Pitt was looking beyond the war to plans for peace which could protect British interests, attract other members of the coalition, and ensure the peace of Europe. He corresponded with Czar Alexander I, who was contradictory in his goals for Russia. The young Czar could never bring into accord his dreams of being both the liberator and the autocrat of Russia. Alexander recommended a policy providing for an international organization to maintain the peace of Europe and proposals for expanding Russia's influence. Pitt tactfully reformulated these propositions to make them still acceptable to Alexander yet palatable to neighboring Austria and Prussia.

### **The First Peace of Paris**

After Paris capitulated in March 1814, the victors met to conclude peace with Bourbon France. Since the allies could not agree, they shelved the most controversial matters, such as the future of Poland, and concluded a treaty with France which was signed on May 30, 1814. Under the treaty France renounced all claims to Holland, Belgium, Germany and Malta; French frontiers were set, with a few exceptions, at those which it had held in 1792; and France ceded three colonies to Britain. The treaty was lenient; there

were no indemnities or reparations to embitter defeated France or to jeopardize the position of the restored Louis XVIII.

#### PRINCIPLES AND PERSONNEL

Certain professed principles guided the diplomats in their deliberations at Vienna, although national self-interest prevailed during the negotiations in the actual decision-making. The principles were: (1) "legitimacy"—the restoration of disrupted dynasties; (2) encirclement of France with stronger powers for security; (3) compensation for countries that lost territory in the shuffle; and (4) a balance of power. The Big Four (Great Britain, Russia, Austria, and Prussia), which quickly became the Big Five with the inclusion of France, decided all important matters and left the small powers to participate on committees and to complain about their inferior status. The major delegates were Emperor Alexander I (Russia), Viscount Castlereagh (Great Britain), Prince Metternich (Austria), Prince Hardenberg, chancellor for King Frederick William III of Prussia, and Talleyrand, the opportunist and irrepressible foreign minister of four French regimes.

### The Vienna Settlement

Dissension at Vienna centered on the question of Poland, a country which in 1750 possessed a vast area and a population of over ten million, but which since then had been completely absorbed by Russia, Prussia, and Austria. The Czar proposed a plan that would restore an enlarged kingdom of Poland with a liberal constitution, but one totally subservient to Russia. The other powers did not want to see Poland become a satellite of Russia. Prussia was willing to give up its Polish provinces in return for the annexation of Saxony. But this would violate the principle of legitimacy by dethroning the King of Saxony and would place Prussia on the doorstep of Austria and France.

The final agreement on Poland and Saxony allowed Russia to retain the Polish province of Posen, and Austria to keep the province of Galicia. The remainder of Napoleon's duchy of Warsaw was set up as the kingdom of Poland with a model constitution, but with an illusory independence since it was placed directly under the suzerainty of the Russian throne. Prussia, in compensation for relinquishing its Polish provinces, received two-fifths of Saxony, Swedish Pomerania, and several Rhenish areas, thus replacing Austria in northern Germany as the dominant power. The other provisions included: (1) the return of British colonial conquests to their previous rulers except for Ceylon, the Cape of Good Hope, Heligoland, Trinidad, Malta, and four of the French colonies—Mauritius, Tobago, St. Lucia, and the Seychelles—which Britain added to its empire; (2) the union of Belgium with Holland to deter French expansion in an area vital to British interests; (3) the ceding of Venetia to Austria to compensate for the loss of the Austrian

#### CONGRESS SYSTEM

Peace negotiations were interrupted by Napoleon's Hundred Days following his escape from Elba. When the conference was resumed, Russia's Wellington's triumph at Waterloo. Castlereagh and Wellington directed British policy, and a second peace with France was negotiated. Prussia wanted revenge and reparations. Castlereagh stood for "security but not revenge," and his moderation and consistency in placing the interests and peace of Europe above the acquisition of more spoils won the support of the other members. In November 1815, the Second Peace obliged France to pay an indemnity of 700 million francs, to support an allied army of occupation for five years, and to abandon Savoy and a few strips of territory on the Swiss and Belgian frontier. In all essentials, France retained her integrity and her honor.

#### THE SECOND PEACE OF PARIS

Netherlands; (4) a loose German confederacy of thirty-eight states with a Diet at Frankfurt; and (5) the transfer of Norway from Denmark to Sweden.

At Castlereagh's and Metternich's prompting, Britain, Russia, Prussia and Austria formed a Quadruple Alliance in 1815 to maintain the peace settlement and quarantine the revolutionary ideas of France. In 1818 France joined, making it a Quintuple Alliance. However, the Alliance's effectiveness was diminished by the Czar's insistence on a Holy Alliance which Castlereagh saw as little more than a piece of peculiar mysticism and nonsense. The Holy Alliance sought to join the kings of Europe in a Christian union of peace and charity. In practice this alliance supported the old regimes and resisted change. The kings of Russia, Prussia and Austria were members. Failure of the Congress System. Castlereagh planned to use the system to protect the small nations and to keep France from rearming. Metternich, and later Czar Alexander, viewed the two alliances differently. They were to be used as approved organs of reaction with the right to intervene in any country to crush national or democratic uprisings. Other rulers of Europe looked upon the Holy Alliance as a pact of three emperors to dominate the Continent. Liberal opinion everywhere condemned the Quadruple Alliance as an effort to protect the status quo in a world demanding change. Britain's old policy of isolation from the Continent soon grew popular again, particularly when the System was used as police action to defeat internal revolts in Spain and Italy. In 1823 George Canning, Castlereagh's successor as Foreign Minister, publicly disassociated Britain from the Congress System.



The success of the American Revolution was not lost on European thought and actions. Within six years of the Peace of Paris the old regime in France was challenged in theory—by the Declaration of the Rights of Man—and in political structure with the revolutionary changes of Republican France. For twenty-two years Britain would be the architect of five coalitions that sought to contain French revolutionary ideas and French imperialism.

Within Britain the movement toward political and economic reform was under way, led by Prime Minister Pitt, Fox, and Wilburforce. The French Revolution halted this progress; reform efforts turned to reaction and repression by the government, as fears of the revolution spreading across the Channel made former reformers turn to the safety of the status quo and the use of repressive measures to maintain it.

Britain emerged from the Congress of Vienna as the premier power in the world and unchallenged in naval supremacy. British policy did not exploit this advantage in the peace negotiations. As a result the balance-of-power principle held in Europe until 1871, and following a century of war, Europe entered a century of relative peace.

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16

**Eighteenth-Century Britain:  
The Age of Reason and  
Revolution**

- 1711 *Essay on Criticism* written by Alexander Pope  
1714 George I accedes to the throne: beginning of the Hanoverian dynasty  
1742 George Frederick Handel conducts the first performance of his oratorio the *Messiah* in Dublin  
1755 Founding of the British Museum  
1767 James Hargreaves invents the spinning jenny as part of the textile revolution  
1769 Significant improvement in the steam engine patented by James Watt  
1776 Death of David Hume, political philosopher  
Publication of *Enquiry into the Wealth of Nations* by Adam Smith  
1790 Edmund Burke’s *Reflections on the Revolution in France*  
1791 Death of John Wesley, founder of the Methodist movement  
1798 Wordsworth and Coleridge publish their *Lyrical Ballads*, reflecting the new Romantic movement in literature

The eighteenth century is commonly characterized as a period of intellectual brilliance, an Age of Reason, a time during which there was a belief that common sense could discover the natural laws which govern society



and the arts. The accent on reason permeated the literature of the Augustan Age, the Church of England, the economics of Adam Smith, and Locke's idea of a "balanced constitution." The religious fervor and political violence of the previous century were regarded with considerable abhorrence by a century given to art, elegance, balance, and stability.

Such calmness and correctness were jolted in the second half of the century by a religious revival, by two revolutions, one in industry and one in France, by the clamor for parliamentary reform, and by the Romantics who rebelled against the coldness of the Augustan literature; they believed that human emotions were more important than human reason. All through the century class distinctions separated the comfortable rich from the miserable poor.

Economic changes at home and worldwide wars abroad for commercial and colonial supremacy transformed the island kingdom into the world's leading industrial power. From 1689 through World War II Britain moved to center stage in world history as one of the major powers in the modern world.

## SOCIETY AND RELIGION

The gulf between the rich and the poor in Britain created essentially a country of two nations with political power and the comforts of society belonging only to the upper class. Good taste and elegance were commonly found among this class, if not always at the court of the first two Georges. The search for excellence or quality was observed in the chinaware of Wedgwood and Spode, the furniture of Chippendale and Sheraton, and the crafted verse of Alexander Pope. In contrast to the lavish life of the upper classes, the lower classes lived in squalor, ignorance, and were exceedingly coarse in manners. The Industrial Revolution increased the shameless display of materialism within the country while wars of commercial aggression were fought against the country's rivals. The established Church, as the handmaiden of the state, did little to raise doubts about the rightness of the social order or to question the morality of the age.

## The Condition of England

In eighteenth-century England a person's position was fairly well defined by birth, and the distinction of class was the accepted order of things. Death everywhere was also the accepted order of things. In 1750 one in three English children died before the age of twenty-one, and the average life span was only twenty-nine years. After 1750 the population grew rapidly, freed from the many epidemics that previously halted its growth. Sanitation and medical care began to improve and the national diet was profoundly altered

by the introduction of tropical fruits and by expanding domestic cultivation of the potato, spinach, and the strawberry. The consumption of chocolate, sugar, and tea became a national habit, and coffee houses became lively centers of news, fashion, and politics.

Heavy drinking was common, and the consumption of gin and rum among the lower classes was widespread. Gambling became a national pastime, so much so that society in the 1760s was called "one vast casino." Government lotteries financed the building of Westminster Bridge (1736) and the British Museum (1755). The immorality, gambling, and brutality of the period resulted in a ready lawlessness. Mobbs gathered at the slightest pretext as a chance for looting and an escape from urban squalor. Public executions were common, serving often as spectacles, but not as deterrents to crime. Prison conditions were wretched, and philanthropists worked to moderate the politicians' obsession with the sanctity of property to save children from the harsh penal laws and conditions. There were more stable patterns of life in the countryside where tradition and customs changed slowly.

## POLITICAL SOCIETY

The smallness of the voting population meant that the politically powerful families could control their electorate with considerable ease. It also meant that politics was personal and clamish, because the members within an oligarchy which dominated the town or county knew one another and had common backgrounds and interests. (In 1721 there were only 179 English peers.) The basic unit of government continued to be the parish in which elected officials, such as the church wardens or the overseers of the poor, were under the supervision of the justice of the peace. The justices and the landed gentry relished the intrigue and electioneering which went on to ensure the control of seats in each constituency. Yet, paradoxically, a growing problem of the unreformed House of Commons was the huge expenditure that was becoming necessary to hold a seat; for a large county election expenses could easily cost a candidate or his patron £100,000.

## THE PROFESSIONS

Bishops, university chancellors, admirals, and captains, as well as politicians, were usually indebted to Westminster for their appointments. Army commissions were bought and could be canceled for opposition to the ministry. In the church the bishoprics were political plums which went to assured supporters of the ministry. Independence of political thought could blight a promising career in the church or the army. Beneath the bishoprics was a pyramid of patronage that went to the discreet politician-preacher or to a relative of an influential member of Parliament. Such a system neither won respect for the clergy nor had any particular connection with theological

conviction or competence. Other professions also had much patronage; the legal profession, except for its highest offices, had perhaps the least of all.

## EDUCATION

The poor could not afford an education, and the state provided none for them. Primary education for the sons of shopkeepers and artisans expanded in the eighteenth century through the efforts of the charity school movement which provided moral instruction for youth. One result of the increased literacy was the demand for more books and periodicals. However, the English universities were dominant in the earlier part of the century. Young gentlemen attending there were frivolous and did little but socialize. Scholarship waned and Oxford and Cambridge virtually ceased to burden their students with any examinations. In contrast, the Scottish universities were much more involved in the European Enlightenment, especially Glasgow and Edinburgh. Glasgow (Adam Smith, Joseph Black, David Hume) became distinguished in mathematics and philosophy; Edinburgh was recognized as the best medical school in the nation.

## CONDITIONS OF THE POOR

The misery of the poor was taken for granted as part of the divinely ordained nature of things. The urban laborer was dependent for survival on the whims of the employer or the handouts of his betters or his parish. There was much sentiment for the virtuous poor and their weary lives as compassionately portrayed in Goldsmith's *The Deserted Village*. Individual philanthropists, such as John Howard who helped improve the conditions of prisons, and Thomas Coram who established founding hospitals, did much to relieve distress. It was the poetry of William Blake at the end of the century that aroused the public conscience to a sense of responsibility for social evils. The government corrected by statute some of the worst social scandals (e.g., the debilitating effects of cheap gin), but there was no significant remedial legislation until the nineteenth century. Gin drinking became a mania since it provided the poor with a temporary escape from their desperate conditions; but it also compounded their problems by ruining their health and increasing crime. Not until the Wesleyan movement was there any real interest shown in the neglected working class.

## Condition of the Church

In 1717 George I discontinued the sessions of Church convocation on the advice of the Whigs who wished to reduce the influence of their political opponents, the High Church Tories. This act left the Church without a legislative body and made it more than ever an appendage of the state, led by clergy who often won high office by their political connections and who ministered primarily to the governing class. For the vast majority of Englishmen, the Church neither ministered to their needs nor won their respect. To

## Wesleyan Movement

the upper class the cold rationalism of the Church made little impact on their skepticism or immorality; to the lower class the very fact that the church catered to the well-to-do and copied their way of life served to remove the poor from its ministry. The Age of Reason reached into religion in the form of deism. This interpretation of theology minimized the supernatural, basing its natural religion on human reason rather than revelation; reason was enthroned, enthusiasm and fervor were suspect. This intellectual religion resulted in sermons which featured serene discourses on metaphysics and ethics, but all too often spiritual or human needs were frequently unmet, especially for the masses.

When the Anglican Church appeared to be too closely identified with the establishment to reform itself, the spiritual wasteland of the eighteenth century was restored to life by Methodism. This revival reached people neglected by the established Church, transformed thousands of lives, and released an emotional flood which was regarded as unseemly in an Age of Reason. The Methodist movement began in Oxford where John Wesley (1703-1791) was preparing for the Anglican ministry and meeting regularly with some friends for Bible study and devotions. The religious devotion of this group was ridiculed by scoffers who labeled the devout members "Methodists." In the organization were the three future leaders of religious revival: John Wesley, a versatile genius and organizer with a sincere and intense religious nature; his brother Charles, a prolific hymn writer; and George Whitefield, an orator who could move the masses with his preaching. John Wesley's life was suddenly transformed by an assurance of "salvation through faith in Christ alone." When Anglican fellow clergy refused to let him preach the doctrine of salvation by faith in their pulpits, Wesley and Whitefield preached in the open air to thousands who would never have entered a church. The moral fervor and enthusiasm of these evangelists swept over the land, and hostile mobs turned into responsive crowds. John Wesley never left the Church of England, but when his converts had no place in which to receive further instruction, he built Methodist chapels. Societies were established under Wesley's organizing skill and vision of Christian discipleship into effective and dynamic groups. After Wesley's death the Methodist movement became completely separated from the Anglican Church.

## RESULTS OF THE RELIGIOUS REVIVAL

Because of his political conservatism John Wesley opposed John Wilkes, the American Revolution, and Catholic emancipation. Nevertheless, his contribution was immense. His preaching awakened the Anglican Church and revitalized its spiritual life. His stress on human brotherhood

and his indictment of social evils produced movements for the abolition of slavery, better working conditions, and prison reform. Some historians argue that the revival saved England from the wave of social and political revolutions that swept Europe. Certainly, Methodism gave meaning and a new self-respect to thousands of the working class who otherwise would have been most ripe for revolution. Methodist influence, by merging with the Puritan tradition, sharpened the Nonconformist conscience in British society. Within the Church of England a revival also occurred; its members became known as Evangelicals or "Low Church" Anglicans. By the end of the century a renewal of religion had helped change the moral fiber of the nation.

## THE ARTS AND SCIENCES

The thought and letters of eighteenth-century England not only mirrored the values of society but also frequently caricatured its standards. The century was rich in intellectual and literary fare and was enhanced by a rational and tolerant spirit which placed increased reliance on observation and on a growing skepticism of traditional attitudes. The Age of Enlightenment was curious about nature and intensely interested in scientific discoveries.

### The Augustan Age

During the first four decades of the century writers turned to the Augustan Age of Rome for their model. The classics continued to serve as the basis of upper-class education, and the eighteenth-century reader responded to the aristocratic tone, the diction, and the reasoning of Latin authors. The neoclassical writers, therefore, imitated the ancients by writing correct and polished essays on mankind and by replacing passion and spontaneity with style and dignity. A new and larger reading public was created by the introduction of periodicals.

JOSEPH ADDISON (1672-1719)

Collaborating with Richard Steele on *The Tatler* and *The Spectator*, Addison became a popular and successful essayist who exposed and commented upon all matters of social life in a style that was witty, urbane, and practical. His most famous literary character was the squire Sir Roger de Coverley.

DANIEL DEFOE (ca. 1659-1731)

Coming from the home of a tradesman, Defoe probably cared little for the classics. He was primarily interested in earning a living and became a political hack until late in life. His novels, written in precise, descriptive

prose, tell the story of lower-class existence. *Robinson Crusoe*, *Moll Flanders*, and *Roxanna* were three of his popular works.

ALEXANDER POPE (1688-1744)

Pope's wide-ranging mind and flawless style echoed perfectly the sentiment "Whatever is, is right" of the Augustan Age. His output covered the fields of literary criticism, social satire, and scholarly editing, but his genius was best displayed in his didactic, subtle poetry. Working within the confining limits of rhymed couplets, his poetry portrayed the aesthetic ( *Essay on Criticism* ) and intellectual ( *Essay on Man* ) interests of his age, and included perhaps the finest mock-heroic attempt ( *Rape of the Lock* ) in the English language.

JONATHAN SWIFT (1667-1745)

Swift's unhappy personal life, in which he hid his virtues and paraded his faults, along with his savage contempt for society, gave him a reputation of being a misanthrope. His original and bold prose scored the follies of people in sinning against the clear light of nature. Swift's devastating satire and irony fill the pages of *Gulliver's Travels* and *A Modest Proposal*.

THE AGE OF SAMUEL JOHNSON

In midcentury Samuel Johnson (1709-1784) dominated the world of letters, not so much for what he wrote—a *Dictionary and Lives of the English Poets*—but for his qualities of character and conversation. These were incomparably described by his constant companion, James Boswell, in his *Life of Samuel Johnson*. Johnson defended the established traditions of church, state, and classical learning, and yet all his contemporaries, from Goldsmith to Hume, held him in highest esteem for his independent mind and freedom from cant.

THE ENGLISH NOVEL

The English novel reached perfection in the work of Henry Fielding (1707-1754) with the characterization and well-balanced plot of *Tom Jones*. Samuel Richardson (1689-1761) in his novels on middle-class manners, *Pamela* and *Clarissa*, contributed to the development of the genre by adding psychological or sentimental detail. Challenging the heavy Augustan standards of Queen Anne's era were the tender, sentimental novels of Laurence Sterne (1713-1768), *Tristram Shandy* and *Sentimental Journey*; and Oliver Goldsmith (1728-1774), *The Vicar of Wakefield* and *The Deserted Village*. Tears and laughter became respectable, and in Goldsmith's satire there was no sting. Poetry again became passionate and personal in William Cowper's (1731-1800) sensitive, religious verses.

## POETRY

The century closed with the forerunners of the Romantic movement: Thomas Gray, Robert Burns, and William Blake. Gray (1716-1771) was a transitional poet, essentially classic in form but novel in his treatment of beauty and sorrow. Burns (1759-1796) was an unschooled poet whose songs dealt with such homely and human topics as love, drinking, and married life. His admiration for medieval and rustic society was a departure from Augustan scholarship. The mystical movement of Blake's (1757-1827) thoughts and the elusive symbolism of his painting and poetry seemed, to his contemporaries, little more than the gropings of an undisciplined imagination. Not until the late nineteenth century was his work understood and appreciated. The literary revolt against the classical traditions and aristocratic way of life had begun.

## THE THEATER

In 1698 Jeremy Collier, the essayist and critic, lashed out at the coarseness and frivolity of the Restoration theater with its Comedy of Manners. Second-rate sentimental comedies, sincere but insipid, played to capacity audiences of the Augustan Age; however, there was relief with the revival of Shakespeare by the actor David Garrick; John Gay's delightful musical comedy, *Beggars' Opera* (1728); and Henry Fielding's burlesque of dramatic conventions in *Tom Thumb* (1730). Oliver Goldsmith with *She Stoops to Conquer* (1773) and Richard Sheridan in such plays as *The Rivals* (1775) and *The School for Scandal* (1777) revived the theater by using comic wit free from the heavy sentimentality of earlier decades.

## ART AND ARCHITECTURE

Eighteenth-century artists painted the fashionable world because society served both as the subjects and the patrons of their work. Sir Joshua Reynolds (1723-1792) was the dean of portrait painters and first president of the Royal Academy; his influence was significant on Thomas Gainsborough (1727-1788) and George Romney (1734-1802). In contrast to conventional subject matter and style, William Hogarth (1697-1764) was a pictorial satirist who painted and engraved the vices of London society. The social caricatures of *Gin Lane* or *Marriage à la Mode* enabled the city to recognize the folly of dissolute living and raised the consciousness of the governing class.

Classical architecture with its refined sense of proportion exemplified in the work of Sir Christopher Wren remained popular in England. Country and town house architecture revealed several attractive variations of Palladian and Neoclassic design in columns, brickwork, and arches. The leading architects of the century were Sir John Vanbrugh, James Gibbs, William Kent, the Adam brothers, and Sir William Chambers. "Capability"

## HISTORICAL WRITING

History was popular because it was conceived of as literature and written for a wide audience. The three most influential historians of the century were Hume, Robertson, and Gibbon. David Hume (1711-1776), a philosopher-historian, wrote a six-volume *History of England*. William Robertson (1721-1793), like Hume, was also a Scotsman, whose writing included histories of Scotland and America and a biography of King Charles V. Edward Gibbon (1737-1794), with his monumental *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, offered a comprehensive and controversial interpretation of the fall of a great classical civilization.

## PHILOSOPHY: IDEAS CONCERNING A FREE SOCIETY

In the eighteenth century English philosophers were asking the question: "What are the crucial characteristics of a free society?" Several answers were forthcoming, and these served as the rationale that stimulated political, social, and economic change as well as the justification for perpetuating certain practices. Eighteenth-century thought was greatly influenced by the work of Newton and Locke. John Locke had relied on his contract-natural rights theory to lay the basis for certain fundamental rights (life, liberty, property) of the individual that, in the final analysis, had priority over the claims of the king. If the sovereign overstepped the bounds of his power and became tyrannical, the oath of allegiance should become null and void. Given certain conditions Locke's argument was a justification for rebellion. Thomas Jefferson largely rephrased Locke's *Second Treatise of Government* to argue the colonial case against George III.

David Hume (1711-1776): *The Dissolving Question*. A skeptical Scotsman, Hume reduced Locke's political problem to a single question: Why is a "contract" which formed a government centuries ago still binding on the present generation? For two reasons only, answered Hume. Because of habitual allegiance (common habit), or because it is to the self-interest of the present generation to have such a government (common good). These two answers became the points of departure for Edmund Burke, and the case for conservatism, and Jeremy Bentham and his theory of utilitarianism a generation later (see chapter 17).

Edmund Burke (1729-1797): *The Case for Conservatism*. In his two best-known works, *On Conciliation with America* and *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, Burke eloquently established a conservative tradition that cautioned against radical change. He approved of the Glorious and the

Brown set the style for hedges and gardens and became England's most famous landscape designer. Thomas Chippendale and, later, Thomas Sheraton created delicate, attractive styles in furniture and Josiah Wedgwood captured the world's trade in exquisite china.



American Revolutions because he claimed they were essentially protecting the right people—responsible citizens who held on to the basic values of the past. In contrast the French revolutionaries repudiated their past and pressed for radical change in the structure of society. Burke expressed no more confidence in the will of the majority than in the absolute will of a king. Instead, he urged slow change—reform through renovation rather than through innovation—and defended the tradition and balance of the British constitution. To some extent Burke's views ran counter to the ideas of the Enlightenment, because he considered "natural man" evil rather than good and defended strong checks and balances as necessary to save human beings from themselves. The greatest liability of Burke's viewpoint was its orientation toward a slow-changing agricultural, handicraft society instead of toward the new machine age with its rapid changes.

**Adam Smith (1723-1790): Free Trade.** In his *Enquiry into the Wealth of Nations* (1776) Smith discussed the nation's affluence in terms of in-

dividual prosperity. He argued that in a free society individuals, inspired by self-interest, would produce a prosperous economy in accord with reason and nature, if not restricted by government regulations. Influenced by the discoveries of the Age of Newton, Smith urged England to apply natural laws to economics: produce what you can most cheaply at home and trade these items freely for other goods, and all will prosper. He was supported by two other classical economists, Thomas Malthus and David Ricardo. In time the link was drawn between free trade and a free society by Adam Smith's followers. His doctrine proved attractive to the classical liberals who believed that government governed best when it governed least, and to the new industrial capitalists who found that the prevailing laws, such as the Apprentices Act and the Navigation Acts, which favored the agricultural and handicraft society, were cramping both their expansion and their profits. These manufacturers, therefore, picked up the cry of "free trade" since they had nothing to fear from international competition.

#### SCIENTIFIC DISCOVERIES

Edward Jenner (1749-1823), physician and naturalist, found an immunity to smallpox with his preparation of a serum from cowpox. The two leading English scientists of the century were Henry Cavendish (1731-1810) and Joseph Priestley (1733-1804). Cavendish discovered that water was composed of oxygen and hydrogen. Priestley was a Nonconformist clergyman and experimentalist in many areas—philosophy, history, religion (Unitarian), and science. He built on the work of Stephen Hales and Joseph Black in isolating gases. In 1774 he isolated oxygen and made possible Lavoisier's work in quantitative chemistry. In physics Priestley discovered the Law of Inverse Squares (1766) which formed the basis of the work of

The French scientist Coulomb. Fascination with electricity led to numerous experiments with lightning conductors by experimenters such as Benjamin Franklin. The hunger for more information and the spread of knowledge was accelerated by the establishment of circulating libraries and philosophic societies; soon every city had both a library and a literary and philosophic society. By 1815 the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* had gone through four editions and new professional journals were appearing. In 1800 the Royal Institution was founded which paralleled the work and interests of the older Royal Society. This scientific interest, however, did not carry over to the application of science to industry. Tradition and superstition retarded the schools of science based upon current investigation. Even the invention of machines was regarded by employer and employee alike as labor- and money-saving devices rather than as instruments of industrial growth.

## THE ECONOMIC REVOLUTION

Three interlocking revolutions occurred in the eighteenth century: in agriculture, in industry, and in transportation. These revolutions did not occur suddenly, rather they accelerated and expanded the countless changes which had been going on since the commercial revolution. But the consequences of industrialization for English society, and later for the world, were profound and revolutionary.

#### Prerequisites for Change

The industrial and agricultural revolutions began first in England because conditions were ripe for change. A half-century of internal peace had encouraged the growth of internal and external trade and this, in turn, promoted increased production. Britain had sufficient capital to pay for improved midwifery, medicine, and founding hospitals. The expanding population reduced the labor shortage, expanded the home markets, and from 1720 to 1760 helped British exports to double in value. The world wanted these exports, particularly textiles; therefore, inventions to save labor and increase production were urgently needed.

#### Agricultural Revolution

To secure better farming and increased efficiency, the agrarian changes which had begun slowly in the sixteenth century accelerated rapidly in the eighteenth century. The new methods of farming brought prosperity and a readiness by landlords to experiment in agricultural production.



## ENCLOSURES

The open-field system was destroyed by the wholesale agricultural enclosures of the Georgian period. Between 1761 and 1801 two thousand private acts enclosing three million acres were passed by Parliament. Local landowners petitioned Parliament for such legislation and usually the bill passed, because the wealthy landholding class dominated Parliament and the protests of the poorer villagers went unheeded. Commissioners then carried out the law; land was valued, surveyed, and redistributed among those entitled to receive portions. The enclosures brought many more acres under cultivation, and the new, compact farms permitted individual farmers to improve their crops and breed cattle without wasting their efforts as they would have done under the open-field system. Enclosures brought efficiency and wealth to landlords and independent farms at the expense of the traditional communal life of the village.

## ACHIEVEMENTS

Wealthy landowners experimented in farming and several had significant success. Jethro Tull (1674–1741) improved seed planting and yield with his inventions of the horse drill which dropped the seeds in rows, instead of the former method of broadcast. After his retirement from politics Charles Townshend (1674–1738) popularized the turnip as winter fodder for livestock. He also experimented with a four-course rotation of crops to eliminate the waste of fallow land. Robert Bakewell (1725–1795) turned the attention of farmers to better breeding for an increased supply of meat. The records of London's Smithfield Market show that the average weight of sheep and cattle more than doubled between 1710 and 1795. These farming methods were popularized by Arthur Young in his writings on agricultural economy. In 1793 Young became head of the first semi-public, semiprivate Board of Agriculture.

## EFFECTS

The diet of Englishmen changed as roast beef and white bread became staples; also the combination of new methods and enclosures helped feed a larger population. However, enclosures had an adverse effect on the lesser tenants who, losing their free fuel and pasturage, could no longer compete and paid the penalty for the changes. The result was the disappearance of the peasant proprietor who sank into proletarian status and became either a rural or urban wage earner.

## Industrial Revolution

The changes in industry were even more fundamental. The Industrial Revolution transformed the very nature of society by substituting horsepower for manpower, the factory for the home workshop, and the city for the village. With these changes came greater productivity and wealth for the

factory owner and misery for the worker in the factory town, a shift in population to the industrial Midlands, and a challenge by the new industrialists to the political domination of the landed aristocracy.

## INVENTIONS

The most remarkable developments of the economic revolution were in technology and in methods of industrial organization. The application of mechanical inventions began in the first half of the century but became extensive only in the latter half as recognizable needs were met by new mechanical improvements. In each case an invention brought about new needs, new problems, and an expansion of the market. A marked advance in one area of manufacturing, such as weaving, produced pressure on the complementary area of spinning to catch up, thereby producing a chain reaction and accelerating the whole pace of technological improvement. Once started, these technological advances never ceased. The Industrial Revolution became a continuing and self-generating phenomenon.

## TEXTILES

Inventions made their first major impact upon the textile industry. The infant cotton industry was aided by the fashion changes in favor of cotton goods and the restrictions on the importation of Indian calico. The increased demand for domestic cottons could not be met by the old domestic system of "putting out" orders to homes on a piecework basis. The outcome was a series of inventions and the transfer of work from the home to the factory, which quickly made England the world leader in the production of cotton goods. John Kay hastened the weaving process with his flying shuttle (1733) and James Hargreaves's spinning jenny (1767) kept the weavers supplied with more spun yarn. Richard Arkwright's water frame took the weaving industry into factories because the new looms were too large for homes and required water power. These inventions were followed by Samuel Compton's spinning mule (1779) and Edmund Cartwright's power loom (1785) for weaving. By this time the supply of raw cotton could no longer keep up with the demand. This problem was remedied when Eli Whitney, an American, invented the cotton gin (1793) to extract seeds from cotton. The machine made the southern United States a land of cotton which soon supplied three-fourths of the total British demand.

## IRON, STEEL, AND POWER

Although England had ample iron deposits, the charcoal used in southern England for smelting was becoming scarce, because the groves of oaks providing the charcoal were depleted. After successfully experimenting in smelting with coke made from coal, the Darbys of Coalbrookdale encouraged the iron industry to move north to the coal regions. In 1784 a

new type of blast furnace, the "puddling" process, perfected by Henry Cort, made iron tough, malleable, and cheap. New iron machinery, such as rolling mills, made iron available for a wide variety of uses, with the result that between the years 1740 and 1840 iron production jumped from 17,350 tons to 1,348,000 tons. Small steel factories were opened at Sheffield and Birmingham, but mass production awaited the inventions of Bessemer in the next century.

The problem of removing water from the coal mines led to use of Newcomen's inefficient steam engine in 1705. James Watt improved the steam engine in 1769 and twelve years later he and Matthew Boulton perfected it for use in the iron and coal industries. Because steam replaced water as the principal source of power for industry and transportation, factories could now operate in large cities away from rivers; furthermore, the development of the locomotive and steamboat was made possible.

### THE REVOLUTION IN TRANSPORTATION

The industrial revolution called for improved methods for shipping iron and coal. In 1760 travel conditions in England were so wretched that travelers and goods moved more slowly than they did in Roman times. The pack horse, slow and expensive, was often the only way goods could be moved, until canals and turnpikes eventually revitalized inland transport. The Duke of Bridgewater had the first canal completed in 1761; immediately the cost of coal was halved in Manchester and new markets were opened. The lesson was quickly learned and by 1815, 2,600 miles of canals crisscrossed England. Ironmasters such as John Wilkinson pressed for major road improvements, and Parliament responded by authorizing turnpike trusts to build, maintain, and charge tolls for new roads. Civil engineers Thomas Telford and John McAdam provided all-weather roads of crushed rock. Stagecoach travel, mail service, a decline in provincialism, and the expansion of industry were some of the advantages to come from rapid and easy transportation.

### RESULTS OF THE ECONOMIC REVOLUTION

The enormous increase in industrial output and the cheapness of manufactured goods increased national wealth and gave England a commanding lead in competition for world markets. This wealth was not widely diffused, however, and the factory employee reaped few benefits from these economic changes. Although the picture of the village farmer has too often been romanticized (as in Gray's *Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard*), the social dislocation, slum housing, and exhausting working conditions of the wage earner were neither acknowledged nor ameliorated until the nineteenth century. These hardships were aggravated by twenty years of war with France and muted only by the Methodist religious revival and the

development of local authorities to administer basic utilities and social services. The city commissioners believed in efficiency and cleanliness and opened the door for the utilitarian reforms of the nineteenth century.

**T**he early stages of industrial capitalism did not distribute its burdens and benefits any more evenly than in pre-industrial Britain. It provided great vitality as an economic force, but much injustice as a social system. The lack of intervention by the ruling classes to ameliorate problems was reinforced by Adam Smith's views on the political economy: the government should not interfere with the natural laws of supply and demand, but should hold to a policy of *laissez faire* ("hands off").

The eighteenth century experienced more changes and a faster rate of change than any preceding century. The revolutions in industry, in political ideology (in America and in France), in migration from village to city, fundamentally altered the material conditions of the nation and the way people lived and worked. Once the wars with France were finally over, pent-up pressures for parliamentary, social, and economic reforms would dominate the national agenda.

The century is regarded as the classical age of the British constitution, a balance between the king, the Lords, and the Commons, even though the future was clearly with the power of the Commons. In a narrow sense the century was the last "age of aristocracy," an age of refinement; the era survives today in the superb country houses and estates, from Blenheim to Woburn, that capture the classical architecture and balance of the period. The achievements of the age, however, were increasingly accomplished by the inventions of individual members of the middle class, from Kay to the Darbys.

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